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Thursday, 22 October 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. García Margallo (Spain)

Members:

Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
Chad	Mr. Cherif
Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
France	Mr. Delattre
Jordan	Mr. Judeh
Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
Malaysia	Mr. Marican
New Zealand	Mr. McCully
Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Ms. Power
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ms. Rodríguez Gómez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Ministers and other distinguished representatives here today. Their presence here is an affirmation of the importance of the subject under discussion.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Morocco, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, Sri Lanka, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite His Excellency Mr. Riad Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Observer State of Palestine to the United Nations, to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

It is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and Her Excellency Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations, to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has once again entered a dangerous phase. The eruption of violence gripping the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Israel and Gaza, shows no signs of abating. Between 1 and 21 October, 47 Palestinians and 7 Israelis have been killed, and more than 5,000 Palestinians and about 70 Israelis have been injured. We condemn all attacks against Israelis and Palestinians alike in the strongest terms. The recent wave of knife attacks and shootings is particularly appalling. There can be no justification for such despicable acts.

As he reported to the Council yesterday, the Secretary-General travelled to Israel, Palestine and Jordan, where he met with senior Israeli and Palestinian officials and King Abdullah II. In all his exchanges, he condemned and conveyed alarm about the upsurge in attacks and violence over the past two weeks and offered his deep condolences to the people of Israel and Palestine. He also had moving meetings with victims and their families on both sides. The Secretary-General's visit had a clear goal — to support collective efforts to stop the violence, reduce the tensions and incitement and begin to outline a political horizon that can lead to lasting peace and security. President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu assured the Secretary-General that they are working to curb the violence, particularly through continued security coordination. Yet while they are important, security measures alone will not suffice.

Let us be clear. There is never any justification whatsoever for murder. That should not stop us from asking why the situation has deteriorated. I suggest that this crisis would not have erupted if the Palestinian people had any perception of hope of a viable Palestinian State, if they had an economy that provided jobs and opportunities, or if they had more control over their security and the legal and administrative processes that define their daily existence — in short, if they did not still live under a stifling and humiliating occupation that has lasted almost half a century. Instead, they see the growth of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, which undermine the very possibility of a two-State solution and pose growing security risks to all. They see the emergence of a parallel *de facto*

settler community, with better infrastructure, services and security than in Palestinian-populated areas. With every passing day, their dream of real statehood is becoming more elusive. Nowhere is the frustration and anger at the current situation more evident than among young people.

The current situation also understandably sharpens a sense of fear among the Israeli population. Israeli civilians see the recurrence of violence as a serious threat to their personal security and that of their country. They are also alarmed about signs that anti-Semitism is on the rise globally. We must understand these Israeli concerns. Israelis see growing attempts in the international community at what they believe is aimed at delegitimizing the State of Israel. When confronted with a climate of terror, Israelis rightly expect their authorities to enforce security.

Taken together, the failed peace initiatives and the reluctance of leaders on both sides to take the bold steps necessary to make progress will create a highly combustible reality in which Israel's security concerns remain unmet and the Palestinian national struggle risks taking on an ever-more violent dimension — and this, in a region already plagued by violent religious extremism.

The Secretary-General condemned the setting ablaze of Joseph's Tomb last week in the West Bank by hundreds of Palestinians. This was a shocking act of violence with the potential to lead to reprisals affecting other holy sites. The sanctity of all holy sites must be respected, especially so as to deny extremist elements any opportunity to transform the current situation into a religious conflict.

Tensions at the holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem continue to be a dangerous driver of the current wave of violence. This year, during the holy month of Ramadan — the most quiet in 10 years, by the way — Jerusalem welcomed some 3 million visits by Muslim worshippers from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. However, extremists on all sides have sought to disturb the historic status quo. Concerns among Muslims that this is under threat have been exacerbated by irresponsible incendiary statements. These have come from a number of sources and directions, reaching the point that many have become convinced that the Israeli Government plans to violate the historic status quo.

The Secretary-General welcomes Prime Minister Netanyahu's repeated assurances that Israel has no intention of changing the historic status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. But that message will resonate only if swift action is taken on the ground that demonstrates this public commitment. In this regard, we welcome the Prime Minister's decision to ban ministers and Knesset members from visiting the Holy Sites. The Secretary-General encourages Israel and Jordan, in view of its special role as Custodian of the holy sites, to act jointly and coordinate the necessary steps. This would be in line with their previous understandings to ensure that the historic status quo is preserved.

The shocking murders of the Dawabsha family in July and the lack of progress in arresting the perpetrators were another critical trigger of the current escalation. This incident reflects an increasing sense of critical exposure among Palestinians in the face of settler violence and reinforces their feeling of injustice. It is imperative that Israel take action to empower Palestinian institutions to protect vulnerable communities. It must vigorously address the perceived impunity for settler violence by expediting investigations and prosecutions of the Dawabsha family's killers.

The third factor perpetuating the fragile situation is the level of force used by Israeli security forces in countering some of the violence. A number of incidents, many caught on video and widely disseminated, call into question the degree of response, including the apparent disproportionate use of lethal force as a first resort. The Secretary-General has reminded Israeli authorities that live fire should be used only as a last resort in situations of imminent threat of death or serious injury. It is their duty to ensure a prompt and independent investigation into incidents where use of force has resulted in death or injury, and to ensure accountability where there is evidence of wrongdoing. The Secretary-General is also concerned that Israeli authorities have resumed punitive demolitions, targeting the homes of perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces.

Incitement is another factor significantly fueling the situation. While leaders on both sides have tempered their rhetoric of late, misleading and inflammatory public statements continue to surface from all sides. The vitriolic nature of the public discourse is alarming. Every incident that takes place evokes impassioned narratives and counter-narratives that feed a vicious cycle of hatred and division.

Contrary to the shameful boasts by militant Palestinian groups, including members of Hamas, there is nothing "heroic" about the killing of an innocent man and the serious injury of his wife and 2-year-old child as they walked through Jerusalem's Old City; or the stabbing of a 65-year-old woman near a bus station in Tel Aviv; or the killing of an Israeli couple while driving with their four children. This is murder, full stop. Crimes like these risk perpetuating the current climate of fear and mistrust. We call on all stakeholders, including the Palestinian leadership, to unequivocally condemn the violence and stand up publicly to extremism and incitement. Failure to do so on the part of both sides leaves the door open for extremists to aggressively promote their destructive agendas.

The first priority for all of us must be the de-escalation of violence. Let me emphasize again, as the Secretary-General did yesterday, that the violence is rooted mainly in the absence of a genuine political narrative and horizon. Each month we have conveyed to the Council the reality on the ground that is the setting of this latest outbreak. Efforts from all quarters must be intensified to restore Palestinian and Israeli hope that peace is still possible. We must urgently achieve real progress towards a negotiated two-State solution.

To do so, we must see significant change of policies, consistent with prior agreements, that will strengthen the Palestinian institutions, economy and security. That would help create the conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations. We need to hear Palestinian leaders address sincerely Israelis' legitimate security concerns and see them take steps to end incitement. To this end, the Middle East Quartet envoys must continue their outreach to regional and international partners to examine how they may contribute to a comprehensive resolution of the conflict. The envoys are planning visits to Israel and Palestine in the coming period.

In conclusion, Palestinians and Israelis deserve a future free from the fear of repeated new rounds of violence. Establishing the beginning of trust between the parties is key to overcoming the painful legacy of this conflict. The United Nations will continue to work at the side of Israelis, Palestinians and international partners to advance this crucial goal towards peace and reconciliation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Malki.

Mr. Malki (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by expressing Palestine's deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Spain for convening this debate, for the seriousness it has accorded to the critical matter before us, and for its able and responsible leadership of the Security Council this month.

I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing. We also express our appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General and his entire team for their efforts to contribute to a de-escalation of the current dangerous situation and to restore focus to the core issues and the imperative for a credible political horizon that will bring an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and denial of Palestinian rights — an unjust and grave situation that continues to threaten regional and international peace and security. Undoubtedly, the rapid escalation of violence on the ground is the direct result of the international community's failure to intervene and assume its responsibilities.

The hopes and national aspirations of the Palestinian people for a future of freedom, security and peace, free from occupation, colonialism, humiliation and injustice, are continuously under assault. The Palestinian people — in particular our children — are being targeted and killed by the Israeli occupation forces. They are denied their fundamental right to life because of their national and religious identity. Their legitimate rejection of illegitimate occupation is being met with killing and destruction.

As we meet today there is a grave escalation on the ground, in particular in occupied Al-Quds Al-Sharif, where incitement and provocation continues in Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, including attacks and incitement by Israeli extremists and officials against Palestinian civilians. We see this day after day. Occupying forces and extremist settlers and their militias have unleashed a wave of violence and hatred against Palestinian civilians, in particular young people.

Since the beginning of this month, more than 50 Palestinians have been martyred, many killed by extrajudicial execution, including at least 10 children. More than 1,850 Palestinians have been injured, with Israel, the occupying Power, using live ammunition against unarmed children. Approximately 1,000 Palestinians have been detained by the Israeli occupying

forces, with homes demolished as part of collective punishment.

Open, racist and irresponsible calls by Israeli Ministers and senior officials concerning the need to use lethal force against Palestinians, in particular against children and young people, have served to entrench a culture of hatred and impunity. Israeli occupation forces, settlers and other Israelis know full well that they will not be brought to account for killing innocent, unarmed Palestinians.

Yet even in the face of grave threats to their human security, dignity and very existence, the Palestinian people remain determined to continue their just struggle for freedom. They are unrelenting in their demand for the realization of their inalienable right to self-determination in their independent, sovereign State, as all other free peoples around the world. That objective is recognized and supported unanimously in the international community.

For years — decades, in fact — we have come here to the Council to warn against the illegal actions and aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. Despite the constant deterioration of the situation and repeated setbacks in the political process, we have maintained that the Security Council must uphold its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and that it must compel Israel to halt its violations. That is a fundamental requirement for progress in the peace process aimed at resolving the core issues and achieving a just, lasting solution based on international law.

Unfortunately, the Council has shown that it is not prepared to shoulder its responsibility to achieve peace and security. Repeated calls by the League of Arab States, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Member States concerned, including Council members, that the Council address the explosive situation on the ground and end Israel's impunity in order to open the path for peace have been to no avail. Instead, the Council has remained paralysed. That will be to the grave detriment of the Palestinian people, if not the entire region. This will exacerbate the crisis. Peace and security remain further distant with each passing day.

Our debate today must focus on the main source of the current violence and the root causes of every other round of violence, which is the continued Israeli

foreign occupation of Palestine, its illegitimate war machine, its ongoing settlement activity, its blockade and its oppression that denies Palestinians every right enshrined in the Charter. We must also not underestimate the living conditions under a barbaric, military, racist occupation, which leads only to suffering, despair and anger. Nevertheless, President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership have been firmly committed to peace. In return, Netanyahu shows only commitment to colonialism and settler colonialism.

The events we are witnessing today prove once more that achieving a just peace on the basis of the two-State solution, along the pre-1967 borders, requires urgent and effective intervention by the Security Council, not just fine words and statements. We would remind permanent and non-permanent States on the Council of their duty to promote the cause of peace and security in the world. All of us know what is required to put an end to this insufferable situation. We know the measures required. Rhetoric and temporary solutions are not enough. The Security Council must emphasize the world's unanimity that peace can be achieved only by ending Israeli occupation and the independence long-yearned for by the Palestinian people — independence in a State along the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. It also cannot be achieved without a just solution to the issue of Palestine refugees, in line with United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Permanent occupation, temporary solutions and merely managing the conflict will never lead to peace and security.

Moreover, the Security Council has a legal and moral responsibility to provide the defenceless Palestinian people with protection for as long as the occupation continues. And that includes the provisions in the report of the Secretary-General on the matter. There can be no justification for those who call for security for the occupying Power while at the same time they fail to call for or provide security for people under occupation: the Palestinian people.

Israel, the occupying Power, is not only in violation of its Fourth Geneva Convention obligations to ensure the safety and well-being of the civilians under its occupation; it is actually the source of their insecurity and suffering. In such a situation, in accordance with article 1 of the Convention and in line with the responsibility to protect, the international community must act to protect the civilian population from the occupation's aggression and war crimes.

Therefore, individually and collectively, States have a responsibility to uphold and maintain respect for international law — which places responsibility on third parties to assist, directly or indirectly, in whatever manner, to stop any illegal measures.

We urge all States to break any ties with Governments that cooperate with the Israeli occupation. Furthermore, there are measures that have led to a grave deterioration in the situation on the ground, including the burning of the Dawabshe family. We do not know about the fate of others. Have they been detained or not? Have they disappeared or not? We simply do not know.

There is an urgent need to label such groups — the settler terrorist groups operating outside the law — as terrorists. That has both legal and financial repercussions. We recall that the Israeli Government has continued to support, aid and give succour to such terrorist groups. They have protected and embraced them and, indeed, urged and incited such crimes. We must therefore work collectively to bring the perpetrators of those crimes and those who abet them to justice. There can be no real protection without accountability.

The Security Council must immediately address the grave situation in occupied East Al-Quds, including the Old City. Israel, the occupying Power, must abide by its obligations to maintain the historic status of Al-Quds, particularly in Al-Haram Al-Sharif, including the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. It is clear that Israel wishes to maintain the status quo of the occupation and not the status quo ante. That is unacceptable. It is unbearable, will only cause the situation to deteriorate and will have incalculable consequences. Preventing the Muslim faithful from entering Al-Aqsa is indeed a breach of the historic status quo. Setting time slots for Muslims to enter the Mosque, in the morning or in the afternoon, is a violation of the historic status quo. Setting a minimum age for entry is also a violation. For the Israeli military police to enter the mosque is a violation. To allow settler groups to enter every morning is a provocation and a violation. Prayer by such groups entering the Al-Aqsa Mosque is a violation of the historic status quo.

Those are some of the many measures that have been initiated and implemented by Israel. Israel states that it does not wish to change the status quo, but it has, indeed, already done so. The ongoing colonial occupation status quo is completely different from that which prevailed between 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, until 2000, when Ariel Sharon visited

the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It was after his visit that changes began to take place, one after the other. Now, Israel is making changes even as it claims that it does not wish to change the status quo. It has changed the status quo. We want Israel to explain to us what it means when it refers to the Al-Aqsa status quo. What does historic status quo ante mean? We call on States, in particular Jordan, which has a special interest in East Jerusalem, to look closely into the issue.

For months now, the Israeli Government has been fuelling the fires of religious racism and hatred by allowing provocations and entry into Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We have warned Israel and the international community that such acts, in addition to the punishment meted out against the Muslim and Palestinian Christian faithful, will, indeed, lead to religious strife. Such warnings, nonetheless, have led to no improvement. Israel continues to take the same measures. As I mentioned, this morning, such settler extremist groups were allowed to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is protected by Israeli security forces, at a time when Muslims are not even allowed to be present — from 7.30 a.m. until 11 a.m. and from noon to 1.30 p.m. Muslim faithful are now banned from entering the Mosque at those times. They cannot enter the site; only Jews are allowed to enter during those two time slots.

The placing of cement barriers in East Jerusalem shows the ugly face of the occupation in that area. The Security Council can, in no way, justify the fact that it is standing on the sidelines, as we face this escalating struggle that is outside our control. It is resulting in religious strife, which is being fed by the current extremist Israeli Government and its Prime Minister. At any rate, no progress can be made towards peace on the basis of the two-State solution, while Israel is, illegally but effectively, changing the demographic facts on the ground in occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, by entrenching its occupation.

We urge the Security Council once again to respond to the current crisis in order to save innocent lives and to allow for the possibility of a just and lasting peace. We also warn that concentrating on short-term formulas in an attempt to deal with the symptoms of the problem instead of its root cause will only cause the situation to escalate and worsen. We commend all efforts being made to refocus our energy on ending the conflict and finding a solution, particularly, those being made by France. We commend the wide-ranging calls made by the members of the Security Council for it to

take up its duties. We welcome and commend the clear declarations of support and participation in creating a credible, political horizon for peace and justice.

Palestine is prepared, as always, to cooperate and contribute to such efforts. Any attempt to abort such efforts will fail and can only take us further away from a just and lasting solution. On our side, we stress anew our firm commitment to pursuing the peaceful, political, diplomatic and legal path towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to reach a just, comprehensive peace that achieves the legitimate, national aspirations of our people, namely, to live in security, peace and justice in our State, Palestine, with East Al-Quds as its capital. We support efforts to find a just solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (1948). The inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, are not open to negotiation. They cannot in any way, shape or form be subject to the mere goodwill of the occupying Power. Furthermore, States cannot shirk their responsibility to protect under international law under the pretext of supporting dialogue between the parties.

The Security Council cannot, under any circumstances, set aside its mandate as the fundamental body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. I would like to call on members of the Security Council to visit the area as soon as possible, in order to underline their role and identify the steps that the Security Council should take in the coming months. The continuing Israeli military occupation is the source of the violence and of this historic injustice being perpetrated against the Palestinian people. The time has come for the international community to bring about the only way to achieve peace by putting an end to Israeli occupation and ushering in freedom and independence for Palestinians.

The struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom, justice and the right of return has been a permanent item on the agenda of the United Nations since its inception. It is the litmus test of the importance of the very principles that underpin the Organization and the entire international system. It is a test the international community cannot fail.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Danon (Israel): As Israel's new ambassador to the United Nations, I have been charged with a sacred

duty: to represent the people and the State of Israel before the nations of the world.

Like people everywhere, the people of Israel seek to live in peace and to see their children prosper. For the Jewish people, who have suffered centuries of exile and persecution, our dream can be summed up in the words of our national anthem: "To live as a free people in our land".

Tragically, since the establishment of the State of Israel, every Israeli in every generation has been touched by war and by terror. My own father, Joseph Danon, was severely wounded by terrorists while protecting the Jordan valley during his reserve duty. After sustaining critical head injuries and hearing loss, he eventually passed away after a long and painful struggle. This was a tragedy for me and for my family. I have experienced at first hand the price of war. We all hope and pray for peace with our neighbours, and we will do all that we can to achieve this noble goal, but we will never compromise the security of the Jewish State.

Today, I address this Chamber at a time of great difficulty and pain in my country and for my people. This is not how I envisioned my first address to the Security Council. Over the past six weeks, a savage tide of terror has swept over the streets of Israel, and yet, to my disappointment, all I hear are calls to end the cycle of violence. Let me make one thing clear — this is not a cycle of violence. These are simply unprovoked attacks against Israelis for no reason other than the fact that they are Jews living in their historic homeland. Like any country, Israel has the right and the obligation to defend its citizens, and this is exactly what we are doing. Any country — any country — whose people were being attacked in the streets on a daily basis would act in the exact same way.

Since Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, Israelis have endured a season of sorrow. Men, women and children have been maimed and killed on the streets of Israeli cities in broad daylight. Palestinian terrorists have chosen Israeli victims at random, using rifles and rocks, butcher's knives, screwdrivers and even two-ton vehicles to shed the blood of innocents. Israelis today know that an attack can come at any time, in any place, without warning and without mercy. From Haifa to Beersheva, from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Israelis walking through their own neighbourhoods are constantly looking over their shoulder to see what

might come. People are afraid to stop for coffee on the way to work or even to take a public bus.

All of us here have families. Mothers and fathers worry that their children could be knifed to death when they leave the house, and children worry that their parents will not make it home. This is the true meaning of terror. When someone leaves home holding a kitchen knife with the intention of killing another person — any person — this stems from a deep hatred. When that someone is a 13-year-old boy who stabs an Israeli boy riding a bicycle 15 times — 15 times — this stems from a culture of hate. Nelson Mandela once said, “No one is born hating another person ... People must learn to hate”.

Tragically, Palestinian children have been receiving lessons in hatred from their leaders, in their schools and on children’s television programmes. A children’s programme was aired on the Palestine Public Broadcasting Corporation media station called “Palestine This Morning”, in which a young girl recited a poem calling for the killing of Jews. The poem called Jews “barbaric monkeys” and “the most evil among creations,” and those who murdered “Allah’s pious prophets”. The young girl concluded, “I do not fear barbarity ... as long as I have my arm and my stones”. This is Palestinian public television.

As we saw in this Chamber during last week’s emergency meeting of the Security Council (S/PV.7536), many seem to be confused about the cause of the current escalation. The words of this young girl hold the answer. An entire generation of Palestinian youth is being brainwashed with bigotry, brought up to glorify violence, and raised to dehumanize Jews. This indoctrination poisons the minds of youth; evidence of this is only a Google search away. All we need to do is take a look at what is showing on Palestinian social media — vicious cartoons showing brutal killings of Israelis, instructional videos on how to commit a terror attack in the most efficient way, even an animated clip of the murder of Eitam and Na’ama Henkin — Israeli parents who were killed in front of their children.

Since most Council members have not seen this clip, let me tell them that a special effort was made to show the fear and terror in the eyes of the Henkin children who were sitting on the backseat of their car as they watched their parents being murdered. It is no wonder that, in the current wave of attacks, at least nine of the attackers have been Palestinians under the age of 18.

When children are taught hostility and hatred instead of math and science, when teenagers are encouraged to grab a knife instead of a book, when young people are shown images of violence instead of a vision for peace, then they too are victims. When we ignore this deliberate corruption of the minds of children, we are not part of the solution — we are part of the problem.

The history of my region demonstrates that hatred starts with falsehood and incitement and ends with violence. The spree of stabbings, shootings and stonings we are now facing began with lies about the Temple Mount. President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership have repeatedly and systematically accused Israel of trying to change the status quo. This inflammatory allegation is false, and President Abbas knows it is false. Yet this deliberate and malicious lie is told over and over again. Not only is this conspiracy theory not true, but it is also not new. Allow me to quote the following:

“We hereby announce ... that no one ... has any intention of infringing the rights of Muslims to the places that are holy to them ... Any attempt to describe the desire of the Jews to pray at this holy place ... as the creation of a strategic base for an attack on the mosques of the Muslims is nothing but the fruit of a fevered imagination or a malicious libel.”

Do the words I have just read out sound familiar? The statement they come from was not issued last week. It was not even issued last year. It was made in 1928 by the National Committee of the Jews of the Land of Israel. Even then, 20 years before the establishment of the State of Israel, lies were spread about the Temple Mount in order to incite violence against Jews. In the violence that followed back then, 133 Jews were massacred and hundreds more were injured.

Today, when President Abbas declares, “Israel intends to make Al-Aqsa Jewish” and says, “We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem”, he understands the consequences of his words. He knows full well that they will lead to new waves of violence and terror and that lives will be lost. Then as now, the story is the same — same plot, same characters, same ending. Actually, there is one major difference. In 1928, the convenient explanations that we now hear so often in this Chamber did not apply. There was no Israeli presence on the Temple Mount. In 1928, there were no settlements; there was no State of Israel; and there were no excuses to sell to the international community.

Whoever claims that Israeli actions and policies are the reason for the violence needs to learn a lesson from history.

The Palestinians are employing old tactics and are trying to score easy victories without having to negotiate. They are using the violence that they have incited and instigated in order to manipulate the international community. Instead of penalizing the Palestinians, the international community rewards them.

Israel is fully committed to the status quo. Under the agreement, Muslims are free to visit and pray at the compound at any time. Members of other religions, including Jews and Christians, may only visit, and may do so only on weekday mornings between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. Israel has not only accepted that arrangement; it is responsible for enforcing it. The facts speak for themselves. Let me share some statistics with the Council.

Every year, there are 3.5 million visits by Muslims, who come to pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and 80,000 non-Muslims visit the site, of whom only 12,000 are Jews. The status quo on the Temple Mount is the only guarantee of the freedom of religion in Jerusalem. We have said it before and we will say it again — Israel will not agree to an international presence on the Temple Mount. If the international community wishes to be constructive, it should focus on ending the incitement.

No nation represented in this Chamber would accept the presence of international forces on its sovereign territory. I would like to tell my colleague, the French representative, that we know that his country wants to see peace in our region. We too want peace, but the only way to achieve peace is through direct talks between the parties. That is the only way. It has proven so in the past, and it is the only way that should be promoted. The best way to reduce tensions in the region is to urge President Abbas to accept Prime Minister Netanyahu's call to meet with him, here at the United Nations, in Ramallah, in Jerusalem or anywhere else. It is the only way to promote peace.

Israel opposes any change in the status quo on the Temple Mount. The place where the status quo needs to change is here at the United Nations. If the United Nations is truly interested in calming tensions and bringing peace to the region, it must change its default settings. The United Nations must end its usual practice of calling on both sides to show restraint, and state

clearly that there is one side that is instigating a wave of terror. It must stop making excuses for the Palestinians and start holding them accountable. It must demand that Abbas cease his incitement and insist that he return to the negotiating table. Only then, once the Palestinians see that promoting violence will get them nowhere, will the reality on the ground change and the prospects for peace return.

Please allow me to conclude with a quote from the Bible: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (*The Holy Bible, Psalms, 29:11*).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

My remarks will be in the following order: a brief introduction, the peace process in the Middle East, Syria, Daesh, Libya and Yemen. To begin, I wish to make three points.

When I assumed the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain in late 2011, the Middle East was experiencing a period of unrest, yet there still were prospects for hope and a window of opportunity. In some cases, dramatic events had led to successful political processes, but in many others conflict intensified and new threats emerged, with tragic humanitarian consequences.

What we have learned since 2011 is that diplomacy and negotiation, when accompanied by determined goodwill and perseverance, are effective instruments for resolving conflict. One such example was the success of the nuclear negotiations with Iran. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet demonstrated once again the value of dialogue to the international community. The conclusion is that we must restore the spirit of cooperation and the will to build mutual understanding, if we wish to put an end to the major conflicts affecting the Middle East. That calls for concerted action on the part of the international community. To that end, as a priority measure, the Council must act in unison.

Allow me to make a few observations on the peace process in the Middle East, beginning with one in particular, namely, that the viability of the two-State solution is in serious jeopardy. In 2016, the coming year, 25 years will have passed since the historic Madrid Peace Conference, where, for the first time, Israelis

and Palestinians sat at the same table to negotiate. The Madrid Conference was a major turning point. We were no longer discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict, but rather a peace process in the Middle East with prospects and hope for making gradual progress towards the possibility of two States, Israel and Palestine, living in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Twenty-five years after the Madrid Conference—a full generation later—peace between Israelis and Palestinians is still far from settled, and the path outlined by the Madrid Conference and the Oslo accords is in danger of abandonment. We find ourselves facing an alarming outlook, including the exhaustion of the negotiation path, the progressive loss of confidence in the viability of the two-State solution and a worrisome upsurge of violence.

Let me be very clear on the following: there are only two solutions to the Middle East conflict: either a single, binational State, or two States coexisting in peace and security. I think that we all agree that the creation of a binational State is not a viable solution. We must therefore renew our support for and confidence in the two-State solution. We must do so decisively and swiftly, distinguishing what is urgent from what is important. What is urgent is to put an end to the tensions that are endangering the process. I have three observations to make in that regard.

Among the factors that triggered the recent escalation of violence and terrorism are troubling elements of a religious nature. Therefore I believe that the proposal of the French presidency, which is intended to guarantee the maintenance of the status quo of the Haram Al-Sharif and holy sites with the most scrupulous respect and tolerance for the different religious beliefs, is an initiative that we must all work on.

Secondly, to defuse the current conflict, we also need to facilitate an interreligious dialogue that condemns the use of violence in the name of religion. The situation cannot be allowed to become a war of religions. Spain, my country, offers to host that dialogue, which we believe to be absolutely essential and, I stress, extraordinarily urgent.

Thirdly, the settlement policy in the occupied territories is one of the major threats to the viability of the two States. In order to make progress towards the establishment of a Palestinian State — of which Gaza

must necessarily be part — it is fundamental that there be unity between the Palestinian political forces on the basis of the principles of the Quartet.

Besides dealing with urgent and immediate matters, we must also deal with what is important. The persistence of the occupation, which leaves no horizon for a political solution, generates frustration among the Palestinian population. It perpetuates the risk of violence and does not contribute to Israel's security. The unsustainability and instability of the status quo become clear and demonstrate the cost of confining oneself to conflict management. We must aspire to solving the conflict, not managing it.

It is urgent to restore hope to the Palestinian people for the realization of their legitimate aspirations to establish a State of their own. It is also urgent to help Israel coexist with its neighbours in the region in peace and with assurances of its security. To achieve those ends, we must not fall into either naïveté or fatalism. Peace is possible because peace is a commitment and a vision. The path has been drawn, but we lack the will, determination and political courage to walk its course.

We are pleased that both parties, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, have formally declared their willingness to negotiate, but that willingness must be translated into specific steps that can change the situation on the ground and generate the necessary confidence, which is a precondition to returning to the negotiation table. These steps include compliance with ongoing commitments in the framework of the Oslo Accords.

The major issue is what we should do to relaunch the peace process and reach a lasting solution. The aforementioned Madrid Conference was a success because it combined dialogue between the parties with a multilateral path, that is, with the support of an international architecture representing a consensus of the international community at the time. Among other things, it made it possible to launch the Barcelona process — today known as the Union for the Mediterranean — exactly 20 years ago.

That is why I believe that we need to redirect our efforts to setting up an international structure acceptable to the parties, one that could re-establish a political horizon for the definitive solution of the conflict. That architecture must involve the countries of the region and draw up a road map that would optimize

possible incentives for peacebuilding, such as a review and update of the Arab Peace Initiative. We commend ongoing efforts to start a new political process, such as those being undertaken by Secretary of State Kerry at this very moment. The expanded Quartet, which met in New York this past September, should be a suitable forum for the search for a solution.

The Security Council must fully assume its responsibility in this context and promote measures that help re-establish calm and security. The Council should be able to pronounce itself and adopt a solid and legitimate political framework. Any framework agreed upon must include a tight timetable — I stress, tight — for negotiations, and parameters based on internationally accepted principles as a base for a solution to the conflict. We must go beyond a simple declaration of policy. I propose that our efforts culminate in a new international peace conference — a Madrid Two, an ambitious conference opening the path to peace and concord and facilitating the conclusion of a definitive accord between the parties that will put an end to so many decades of conflict.

Now I shall move to comments on Syria.

It is also urgent that we be much more ambitious and effective when we deal with the Syrian conflict. Here, the main victims are the civilian population. Our inability to reach an agreement to promote a political solution to the conflict in Syria is leading us to an accelerating series of initiatives that open scenarios of great uncertainty for the region and for the entire international community. The United Nations — particularly the Security Council — must play a key role in the solution to the conflict. It is Spain's opinion that we must continue working in accordance with the following parameters.

First, we must support the plan of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, which allows for partial and comprehensive ceasefires that in turn will make it possible to send humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population and stem the flow of refugees towards neighbouring countries and now also towards Europe.

Second is unity in the fight against Daesh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The international community must continue deepening this fight, in a coordinated and collective fashion, through a response that goes much farther than the military dimension. International cooperation in areas such as the fight

against the influx against foreign fighters, financial resources and dealing with the Daesh phenomenon in the media is particularly important when it comes to putting an end to the barbarity and terror of Daesh. Spain is fully committed and participates in that collective effort in its various facets.

Third is the humanitarian area. The Security Council must continue working on the different initiatives for protection and support for the population affected by the conflict. We are working with France and the United Kingdom to promote an initiative that will put an end to indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population by all parties to the conflict, including, in particular, the use of barrel bombs. It is also important to respond immediately to other humanitarian requirements, specifically respect for medical neutrality and humanitarian access to areas under siege. We are working on that with Jordan and New Zealand.

Fourth is the systematic involvement of the most heavily affected regional Powers, including Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Fifth is to start a process of transition to an inclusive Government with full executive powers, in which the Syrian population feels fully represented and with enough legitimacy to push for a political change in the country. We will need, first, to ensure the restoration of the rights and freedoms of the Syrians so as to create conditions that will make it possible, in a second, later phase, to move on to the political transition proper, with the legalization of political parties and the holding of free and fair elections.

Sixth, Syria will be whatever the Syrians decide it will be, but there are principles that cannot be renounced: the territorial integrity of the country, the secular nature of the future regime, and maintaining the structures of the present State so as to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Seventh, we must work to achieve the participation in the peace plan of the various parties to the conflict. Their commitment is needed to pave the way for a transition process in Syria.

On Lebanon, I wish to stress two ideas.

First, we must promote peace and stability in the Middle East region, which calls for support and solidarity for the countries that are suffering the most direct impact of regional conflicts and that with great generosity have welcomed the growing influx of

refugees, in particular Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt, among others.

Secondly, we are concerned at the situation in that country, because in order to address the various challenges facing the region and consolidate national coexistence, it is vital to overcome the current institutional paralysis. The international community's commitment to Lebanon is reflected in the support provided by the provisional presence of the United Nations, in which Spain participates as one of the major contributors, with 566 troops.

Let me conclude by touching on the situation in Yemen. The catastrophic humanitarian situation is aggravated by the repugnant activities of terrorist organizations in Yemen such as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Daesh, which make the most of the security vacuum created by the conflict. The international community, in particular regional actors and the parties themselves, must continue to work to relaunch the inter-Yemeni political dialogue, so as to achieve an inclusive and lasting solution that will guarantee the stability, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen.

In the quest for such a solution, the United Nations must continue playing a leadership role. Unity among all of us is indispensable in order to successfully respond to this crisis. It is our hope that in the days to come, the parties will initiate conversations in good faith so as to lay the foundation for the peaceful coexistence of all Yemenis in a post-conflict scenario. To that end, a genuine, renewed commitment on the part of the international community will be required to support the authorities, civil society and the people of Yemen as a whole in a process of political transition, institution-strengthening, stabilization and reconstruction.

Let me conclude by saying that in such situations, the Security Council must be able to shoulder its responsibilities and offer a way out that guarantees international peace and security, because what is at stake is the very credibility of the Council itself.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Judeh (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): This quarterly meeting of the Security Council on the situation in

the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, is being held at a time when the entire Middle East region is grappling with increasing and unprecedented tensions, upheavals and challenges that seriously not only threaten international peace and security, but also regional peace and security. Convinced of that truth, this quarterly meeting is being held at the ministerial level, as the State members of the Security Council are aware of the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories at its core, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the occupied Al-Aqsa Mosque. They are convinced of the need to work immediately to curb its potentially dangerous consequences and to attempt to restore peace and stability throughout the region, so as to pave the way to a lasting solution to all of the challenges, threats and tensions in the Middle East.

The last two months witnessed another dangerous escalation by the Israeli occupying authorities in the occupied West Bank in general, including acts of aggression carried out by, or under the protection of, Israel against Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in particular. This represents a continuing and flagrant violation of a series of previous Security Council resolutions that considered, firmly and clearly, all the measures undertaken by the Israeli occupying authorities in occupied East Jerusalem in its entirety absolutely null and void, in conformity with the clear and decisive recognition of the Security Council that East Jerusalem in its entirety, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, is part of the territories that were militarily occupied by Israel in 1967, in accordance with the norms of international law and international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, this escalation and these Israeli acts of aggression, which are dangerous and have been condemned and rejected, in addition to the violations in Al-Haram Al-Sharif, have resulted in the deterioration of the situation, in a way that puts us on the verge of a devastating religious war. These acts fuel and provoke the sentiments of more than 1.5 billion Muslims throughout the world, all the more so because the occupied Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque are a place of worship for Muslims exclusively. In addition, these acts of aggression have a devastating impact on the opportunities to resume the negotiation process between Palestinians and Israel aimed at bringing about Israeli-Palestinian peace by means of a solution based on the peace process established

under international terms of reference, resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative, with all its elements.

The position of my country, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, led by his Majesty King Abdullah II, is to carry out the two-State solution, put an end to the occupation, create the independent Palestinian State enjoying full sovereignty on its territories on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, find solutions to all the core questions — Al-Quds, refugees, security, borders, water — in keeping with the pillars I previously mentioned, and in such a way that safeguards and achieves the high interests of Jordan, which are related to all those issues, especially Al-Quds and the refugees. This is the only solution that will help us to avoid the dangers and violence that we see every day, such as what we are all talking about concerning the possible dictation of the one-State solution, which the President referred to in his statement.

Because of the recent violations in the occupied Palestinian territories committed by the Israeli occupation authorities, or under their protection and watch, in occupied East Jerusalem in general and the violations against Al-Haram Al-Sharif/the Al-Aqsa Mosque in particular, we have seen signals of a major and widespread escalation in the situation, which could spin out of the control of any party. Its impacts, especially in terms of the violence, the killings and the counter violence, could extend beyond the occupied Palestinian territories in a way that would threaten international peace and security.

I reiterate here Jordan's principled position condemning the targeting of civilians, regardless of its motives and reasons. The Israeli Government must renounce the tactics and arguments of its internal coalitions, which are no longer secret to anyone. The Government must adopt an approach to match its repeated claims of commitment to peace with actions and policies leading to peace, instead of pursuing its policy of divisiveness and the flagrant contradiction between what it says and what it does.

Peace will not be achieved if Israeli's unjust attacks on the Christian and Muslim holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem continue. Peace will not emerge from continued unilateral Israeli measures aimed at prejudging the results of the negotiations on essential issues, first and foremost of which is the Israeli settlements policy. We will come no closer to

peace with the continuation and escalation of Israel's collective punishment against Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories and its continuation in imposing closures, blockade, the erecting of walls of separation, demolishing homes, killing of innocents, the seizure of land and other measures that violate international law, international human rights and international legitimacy. Peace will not be achieved if Israel remains wedded to those illusions and attempts to convince the world that undertaking symbolic and economic steps to improve the lives of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, even though those measures are important, will be an objective in themselves, not only a means on the road to put an end to the Israeli occupation and to establish an economy of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State living in genuine peace and security side by side, and with, the States of the region and their peoples. Comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, in turn, will not be achieved without Israeli-Palestinian peace and a two-State solution. We will not be able to effectively and sustainably fight terrorism or extremism or triumph and see the values of the whole of humankind prevail without Israeli-Palestinian peace and Arab-Israeli peace.

Jordan remains committed, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, to achieving a permanent, fair and comprehensive peace on the basis of international law and the agreed terms of reference. That commitment is firm and an internationally recognized strategic choice. Our credibility within the framework of that commitment does not need to be proved. Our commitment, duty and responsibility with regard to the preservation and protection of Muslim and Christian holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, with Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque at its very heart, fall within the framework of the Hashemite protection of those holy sites. That protection is assured by His Majesty King Abdullah II, who is the guardian of those holy sites. His commitment is unequalled.

When we say that the Israeli occupation authorities continue and escalate their violations in the occupied East Jerusalem and against the Islamic and Christian holy sites, including Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, we are not exaggerating. Those ongoing, increasing and dangerous violations, which have worsened anew over the past two months and led to deterioration in the situation in the occupied Palestinian

territories and has brought it to the brink of exploding, violates the historic status quo of the Christian and Muslim holy sites.

The Israeli Government claims that it preserves it, as it is not in keeping with the Israeli commitments pursuant to article 9 of the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement. It also runs counter to the legal obligations of Israel as the occupying Power in keeping with the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law, which are strengthened by international resolutions adopted by United Nations entities. We in Jordan, as always, will deal with these Israeli acts of aggression, which are condemned and rejected. If they continue, they will undermine the peace process, its prospects and all of its achievements.

We have said it before and we will say it again: Jordan uses all diplomatic and legal options available to it to put an end to these brazen and irresponsible violations of international law. I note that the diplomatic options chosen by Jordan have in the past forced Israel at various periods and stages to adopt a number of temporary measures to calm the situation, and it did temporarily. However, later, Israel has always continued its attempts to modify the historical status quo in violation of all understandings and agreements, which were agreed by Israel. Jordan has therefore closely considered the legal options to address the Israeli violations, and will continue to proceed in that direction with the aim of putting an end to these violations, protect Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, and ensure that Israel respect its international legal commitments.

We also ask the Council to assume its responsibilities in this regard, because these violations committed by the Israeli occupation and the situation, which are universally condemned, represent a real threat to international peace and security. We must adopt protection measures to ensure that these condemned aggressions are monitored and that they do not recur once the historical status quo has been restored, as opposed to the new situation being created on a daily basis by the Israeli actions in the Islamic and Christian holy sites. We must restore and preserve that historical status quo, in both word and deed.

Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, has undertaken a number of measures to protect the holy sites in Al-Quds. The King has a crucial role to play with regard to Al-Quds Al-Sharif and to the Islamic and Christian holy sites within the

framework of the historic Hashemite protection of the holy sites, which must be strengthened and supported at the Arab-Islamic level through words, deeds and various measures. Israeli occupation aggression and schemes in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and against the holy sites, especially Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, cannot be successfully and comprehensively challenged except through collective, coordinated, comprehensive and harmonized Arab, Islamic and international efforts that effectively utilize the available measures to deter Israeli aggression against the holy sites. These measures should be strengthened, especially with respect to the historical Hashemite protection and the protection afforded by His Majesty the King to the holy sites. We need to promote the role and work of the Islamic waqfs, which are part and parcel the prerogative of the Waqf Ministry.

The topic of our meeting is "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". I would now like to touch upon Syria, where the situation is deteriorating.

We have all been witness to a number of alarming trends. The impact of the deteriorating situation has gone beyond Syria and its immediate neighbours to be felt internationally. I refer to the Syrian displaced and asylum-seekers, who no longer limit themselves to seeking refuge in neighbouring States. Jordan is among those States that have welcomed a growing number of Syrian refugees, who now number 1.5 million in Jordan, some of whom are officially registered as refugees and some are not. That is a burden on our budget and costs us billions of dollars at a time when my country is facing huge economic challenges as a result, in great part, of the very difficult situation in the Middle East. We are sharing our very limited resources with our brothers and sisters and making our infrastructure available to them, on behalf of humankind as a whole, but our capacities are overstretched. The international community should help us in bearing this very heavy burden. Criminal gangs and terrorists continue to control vast stretches of territory in Syria, which of course constitutes a very significant threat to that brotherly country.

We in Jordan reiterate our firm belief, as we have over the past five years, that a comprehensive diplomatic solution is the only solution to this crisis. Such a political solution, based on the decisions of the Geneva I Conference on Syria and supported by the whole world, must be comprehensive. It must be inclusive and meets the aspirations of the Syrian people, the outcome

of agreement among all components of Syria, and lead to transition to a new political reality desired by the Syrian people. It must enable us to put an end to terrorism, which is also an objective we all agree upon. It should restore stability and security throughout Syria, allowing for voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their cities, towns and villages. And it must preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and its political independence. We therefore renew our continued support to all efforts to open the door to a new comprehensive political solution.

I reiterate my country's support to efforts aimed at confronting and defeating terrorism in brotherly Iraq. I emphasize that our victory in that regard hinges quite organically on our efforts to combat and eliminate terrorism in Syria and requires a unified, comprehensive and coordinated approach from all us to fight terrorism in those two brotherly countries and the region as a whole. Terrorism is now a major and immediate threat and is no longer a challenge faced by any single country. It is a spreading scourge leading to violence, hatred, division and rejection of others. Today gangs of terrorists and criminals are spreading and extending in various forms and manifestations and have become a threat to international peace and security. Terrorism exploits and distorts the very noble Muslim religion to serve its own callous interests. As His Majesty King Abdullah has said,

"The war against those terrorism gangs and mavericks of this era is above all that of Arabs and Muslims before any other, and we do wage it to defend our great religion, our noble civilization and to preserve peace and security in our States and for our peoples."

My country's position concerning the ongoing crises in Libya and the situation in brotherly Yemen and efforts to restore legality, of which we are part, is well known, and I will distribute it in the full text of my written statement. But I would just like to emphasize that the political process in Libya should continue. We urge all states and parties to abide by the results of the Skhirat agreement and the need for all to sign this agreement, which ensures stable peace for Libya. As far as Yemen is concerned, we endorse a political path that underscores the legality of the Government and presidency of that country.

Finally, I reiterate that the very dangerous and unprecedented situation in our region, especially in

the occupied Palestinian territories, and the ongoing and escalating Israeli violations in East Jerusalem and its holy sites, require the Council to act and assume its responsibilities, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations, to manage and resolve the crisis and prevent further escalation.

Mr. McCully (New Zealand): It is with a sense of dismay that we address the Council today on the lack of progress in relations between Israel and Palestine and the violence that has raged there in the past few weeks. For the nine and a half months we have been non-permanent members of the Council, we have made clear New Zealand's view that concerted Council action is required to jump-start the direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians that are the only means by which a durable solution can be found.

Over recent months, we have been concerned to hear the ongoing repetition of a defeatist narrative that is in danger of becoming self-fulfilling: "The conditions are not right; the parties are not ready". But if the conditions are not right for direct talks, then surely it is the Council's role to try to create the right conditions. If the parties are not ready, then surely the Council should tell them to get ready, help them get ready and give them a time frame within which to be ready.

No one can excuse the violence that has taken place, but we should understand that it is at least in part a result of a failure of the diplomatic or political process. While those guilty of acts of violence must take responsibility for them and be held to account, the Council must take responsibility for the failure of the diplomatic and political process and move to resolve it.

We therefore welcome the opportunity for the Security Council to focus on this matter today, and hope that the Council can find a way to extend greater protection to those under threat of violence, and hope to those who currently have none. Ultimately, the Council will be judged not by the quality of the words that are spoken around this table, but by the quality of the actions that follow. What actions should the Council take in relation to the question of Palestine in the circumstances that confront us today?

First, we must clearly and unequivocally call for a cessation of the violence and for the leaders of all parties to use all of their authority to end it.

Secondly, we should restate the unambiguous commitment of the Council to a two-State solution as the only acceptable basis for sustainable peace.

Thirdly, we should be clear that a sustainable solution can be achieved only through direct talks between the parties, supported by key stakeholders, including the Council.

Fourthly, if the parties are not ready and the conditions not right for those direct talks today, then the Council should mandate a course of action allowing the parties to get ready and making the conditions right for those talks to commence within a realistic but early time frame.

My country strongly welcomes the very clear signal sent by the Secretary-General in undertaking his visit to the region this week. We believe that the Council must also send its own clear signal to the parties, to their neighbours and close friends and to the international community. This is a time to focus on what can be achieved, rather than to lament what cannot.

Since joining the Council, we have been clear that we will work cooperatively with other Council members to advance any constructive proposals in relation to the Middle East peace process. It has been six long years since the Council adopted a formal resolution on the matter. The events of recent weeks cry out for action. While we remain ready to support any other reasonable proposals for progress, we will, over the coming days, share with colleagues the text of a draft resolution giving effect to the four steps that I have just outlined. We do so in the hope that the draft resolution will at least stimulate a level of debate and engagement that will enable the Council to chart a way forward.

New Zealand is pleased to note the increasing level of activity by the Quartet. We are especially pleased to see the Quartet moving to engage the leadership of Arab nations through the so-called Quartet-plus format. We see that format as being the appropriate vehicle through which the Council can mandate the necessary actions and receive regular reports of progress. It may be that a parameters resolution will be required in the early part of next year.

We appreciate the fact that, over time, the Middle East peace process has absorbed the energy and attention of many good people. In particular, we admire the huge energy and commitment brought to the topic by United States Secretary of State John Kerry. We hope that the

efforts of the Council will help create a space in which the diplomatic leadership of Secretary Kerry and others might succeed. If there is one lesson we can learn from previous attempts to resolve this seemingly intractable problem, it is that it will require the concerted support of the entire international community for diplomacy to find a solution. While no words from the Council will themselves bring about a solution to the Palestinian question, it is our duty today to find ways to stem the violence and then to find a framework that creates space for the diplomacy and political engagement that are so seriously overdue.

Ms. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General for his presence today. We also commend the initiative of the Spanish presidency of the Security Council, because we know that the Middle East is passing through a very dangerous period, not only for the subregion but for humankind as a whole.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The situation in the Middle East, in particular in Palestine and its occupied territories, is a matter of deep concern for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The recent wave of violence that has lashed the occupied territories for the past 19 days has left more than 53 dead and thousands wounded. That cannot be interpreted in isolation. It is the result of the prolonged illegal occupation for almost 60 years that has denied the Palestinian people their human rights and the right to self-determination as a free and independent country. I especially welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine at this meeting. We also welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General during his recent visit to Palestine and Israel aimed at persuading the parties to put an end to violence in the occupied territories.

I will pause here to make a clarification. Language is important. If we look at the agenda item of today's meeting — "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" — what we face in Palestine is no longer a "question". We should be speaking of the tragedy of Palestine, because for seven decades the Palestinian people have faced terrorist assaults,

massacres and the complete denial of the human rights of men, women, children and the elderly.

A conflict, as we have indicated on other occasions in this Chamber, presupposes equality between the parties. But we cannot equate victims with those who victimize them. That is not correct. We need to clarify our language. However, we appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General. And we believe it is necessary, as has been said before, for the Security Council to visit the region so as to reaffirm the responsibility of the Organization and promote of a political solution to the conflict, which has become a permanent act of aggression by the State of Israel against the people of Palestine and even, I dare say, against its own people. We are certain that the great majority of the Israeli people yearn for a permanent peace. My country is aghast at the historic level of violence and damage that Israel has caused the Palestinian people, who find themselves without due international protection. We echo the request by the Palestinian delegation for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility in this situation, all the more so now that the population of Israel has begun to take up arms to create paramilitary militias that will exacerbate the conflict.

Over the course of seven decades, the toll has been 42 massacres and hundreds of thousands of people killed. We must speak clearly and firmly on that point. Throughout the 70 years of the existence of the United Nations, the people of Palestine have faced a continuous state of complete lack of respect for their most fundamental rights. It is unfortunate that, ever since the Organization was established, no political solution to that bloody conflict has been found. That is a subject of frustration for the Organization, and no doubt for the international community as a whole. Israel's systematic policy of denying the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the existence of their own sovereign State has created the conditions under which extremism and violence win over the civilian population, especially young people. The deliberate intention of the State of Israel to impede the success of every attempt to negotiate a firm and lasting peace should capture the attention of the entire international community. The occupying Power generates brutal cycles of violence in order to justify its oppression and control of the territory in a permanent process of colonization. In just 10 years, from 2004 to 2014, Israel's military spending has been almost €110 billion. I do not know whether the representative of Israel, in the

statement he made earlier, was referring to the amount spent to fight defenceless children. This photograph was taken just one day ago. Has the military spending been devoted to fighting those children? Or perhaps to flouting the rights of children, as members can see in this other image.

One year after the military aggression against Gaza, we must not forget the suffering of the victims of the ill-named Operation Protective Edge, which, according to information in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/677), led to the death of 551 children out of a total of 2,251 victims altogether. That paints a picture of war crimes committed by the occupying Power and demands international punishment for the perpetrators. That was one year ago. Those are only a few images, but we know that the international community was horrified, and there are even more tragic and dreadful images that, perhaps, we have not brought into this Chamber because the day is far from over.

In Gaza, the ongoing crisis is the worst of the past decade in humanitarian terms. Israel is hindering the work of reconstruction by obstructing imports of medicines and access to school supplies and sanitation and farming equipment. This initiative, which has depended on the support of the international community, has been cut short by the occupying Power's refusal to relax its control of access to Gaza. Israel's aim is perfectly clear. It wants to divide the Palestinians and render the existence of an independent State of Palestine impossible. I cannot fail to mention the situation in Palestine right now, in which more than 300 children have been detained, in contravention of international law and in violation of their human rights. Their status as minors has been ignored and they have been subjected to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment by the occupying Power. Where Palestinian children are concerned, Israeli jails bring us back to humankind's darkest times, in which torture and persecution have become the rule rather than the exception.

The acquiescent attitude that some States exhibit vis-à-vis the Palestinian question should draw the attention of the Council and the entire international community. Every effort to resume political talks is blocked by the hegemonic centre. It would appear that the only path for Israel is colonizing Palestinian territory and denying that nation its right to self-determination. The result, paradoxically, is that since the Quartet began using its good offices to get peace talks started, the Government of Israel has unleashed

a new wave of oppression and widespread violence that has blocked the path we need to a just and lasting peace.

We call on the Security Council to speak out immediately, demand that Israel end this new cycle of violence and put the Palestinian people under international protection, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Council's own resolution 904 (1994). Palestine's appeal for the protection of the lives of its citizens from the occupying Power's continued and systematic aggression must be heard. In this context, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela rejects the use of the veto, which only promotes terror through impunity. In the context of the Palestinian tragedy, it is a veto of shame. Venezuela reaffirms its full support for the right of the citizens of the State of Palestine to self-determination and to live within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

On 30 September, we witnessed the raising of the Palestinian flag as part of the Organization's seventieth anniversary celebrations, testifying to the commitment of the majority of the Members of the United Nations to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. This organ should therefore act in accordance with the decision and the voices of the majority of its members. It is high time that the State of Palestine became a full Member, and that the threat of a veto by one member of the Security Council cease being used as a weapon prolonging the suffering of the Palestinian people. It is a veto of shame that encourages terror and impunity.

We support every initiative aimed at achieving a lasting solution to this tragedy. It is vital that the Security Council act urgently to advance the negotiations, in view of the fact that the failure to resolve the issue is having a serious impact on peace and stability in the Middle East. We will give unreserved support to a resolution aimed at contributing to a definitive solution to this prolonged conflict that includes an immediate halt to Israel's occupation of the territory that historically belongs to the Palestinian people, as well as an end to its racially and religiously discriminatory policies and efforts to crush the people of Palestine.

I cannot conclude without expressing, on behalf of the President and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, our full support for the Russian Federation's action in Syria. We know that right now President Putin

is giving the entire Western world a history lesson by fighting terrorism directly, without double standards or politically exploiting an issue as sensitive as that of terrorist violence, but which other Governments have used to ignore or strike down Governments that are not useful to their imperialist purposes.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over today's meeting, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his thorough briefing and the Foreign Ministers present for joining us today.

Across Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, clouds of fear have settled in. In the context of the recent violence, one Israeli told a reporter, "I just don't feel safe any more I watch to see who the people are around me. I want to know who is behind me". A young Palestinian said, "[Y]ou are worried that someone will shout, 'This is an Arab, this is an Arab,' and someone will shoot without you doing anything." An Israeli tenth-grader said, "I'm petrified. Children are scared to leave the house. They won't go to the shop or walk around the neighbourhood". Across the city, a Palestinian father said, "I don't feel safe. The best strategy for me was to keep the children home from school". In Jerusalem, shoppers and merchants are on edge. An Israeli shopkeeper said that his customers came, bought and fled, and that people are afraid. Said an Arab shopkeeper in the Old City, "When I prepare the juice, I am scared to cut the oranges in case someone sees me with the knife and shoots me".

That mutual fear risks worsening the already dangerous cycle of violence. The United States is deeply concerned, and condemns in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attacks and the recent and ongoing violence. The human suffering inflicted by these acts has been grave and continues to deepen. We mourn the loss of all life and continue to stress how important it is that both parties condemn the violence and avoid provocative statements that could further inflame tensions. Both sides must exercise restraint.

There is growing frustration on all sides as the prospect of reaching a two-State solution appears to be diminishing. But that frustration is not a justification for reprehensible acts of violence against civilians. Stabbing innocent people as they go about their day is not an acceptable way of expressing anything. It is, as the Deputy Secretary-General just said, attempted murder, full stop. Such attacks must be unequivocally

condemned in Israel, as they would be in any of our countries. We support Israel's right to defend its citizens, and we mourn the senseless and deliberate taking of innocent lives. We have also expressed our deep concern about the deaths and injuries of Palestinians due to live fire from Israeli security forces, and we have urged Israel to take steps to prevent an escalation of the violence. As always, it is critical that every possible effort be made to guard against unnecessary loss of life, protect the innocent, reduce tensions and restore calm.

We have also raised our heightened concern about the increased Israeli settler violence against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank. Most immediately, we urge all sides to take affirmative steps to restore calm and reduce tensions. In that regard, we welcome Israel and Jordan's commitment to maintaining the status quo at the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and we strongly support the efforts of all sides to ensure that this status quo is indeed maintained. Prime Minister Netanyahu has publicly committed to that point.

In the longer term, we remain concerned that the trends on the ground, including violence and settlement and outpost activity, are dangerously imperiling the viability of a two-State solution. As the Quartet statement of 30 September said, the United States and its partners support concrete steps to help stabilize the situation, show meaningful progress towards a two-State solution and restore hope. Together we must continue to press for meaningful steps that will lay the groundwork for achieving a negotiated two-State solution. Significant policy advances, particularly in Area C, will be critical to increasing the Palestinian Authority's ability to address key economic and institutional challenges. These can be pursued while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs. Indeed, they will enhance stability and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We continue to believe that the best way to reduce tension is to work towards a political solution that will result in two States living side by side in peace and security. Only through a solution negotiated by the two sides will true peace and security be achieved.

Secretary Kerry had a constructive meeting earlier today with Prime Minister Netanyahu. They discussed the security situation in Israel, the West Bank and the region, as well as the situation on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. A number of constructive proposals were suggested, including steps that Israel could take to reaffirm its continued commitment to maintaining

the status quo on the Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Both agreed that there is a need to stop incitement, to reduce tension and to restore calm. The Secretary will discuss this further when the Quartet Ministers meet in Vienna tomorrow, and he will then travel to Jordan, where he will meet separately with President Abbas and King Abdullah on Saturday. In his meetings, the Secretary will be encouraging efforts to restore calm and bring an end to the violence.

We cannot discuss peace and security in the Middle East and not address the horrific situation in Syria, which has escalated dramatically since we gathered for our last quarterly open debate on the Middle East (see S/PV.7490). The repercussions of events there also reverberate well beyond the region. After four and a half years of war, Syrian civilians continue to endure barrel bombs, extremist violence and widespread deprivations. In September alone, the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that the Al-Assad regime dropped 1,715 barrel bombs on its own people, hitting mosques, hospitals, schools and other civilian infrastructure. The death toll over the course of the conflict has surpassed 250,000 people, and that figure does not include the tens of thousands of missing Syrians. In addition, more than 10 million Syrians are displaced.

The new Russian military offensive has worsened an already dire situation. Around Aleppo and Homs, Russian airstrikes are providing cover for an offensive by Al-Assad's forces, supplemented by Iranian and Hizbullah fighters. According to the United Nations, the new offensive has forced as many as 50,000 more Syrians from their homes in the south-western districts of Aleppo City, and another 35,000 from Hama. That is 85,000 people newly displaced in a relatively short period of time. Returning from southern Aleppo earlier this week, Dr. Zedoun Al-Zoabi, head of the Union of Syrian Medical Relief Organizations, said, "People are scared to death. Everyone is on the move".

Russia says that it is defending Syrians, but according to credible Syrian observer groups Russian strikes around Aleppo City have primarily struck critical civilian infrastructure, including schools and markets. At least 100 civilians have been killed by these strikes to date, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. The Russian offensive has also been profoundly counterproductive, even in relation to its stated goals, as it concentrates its firepower not on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), but on

groups that in many cases have taken huge casualties fighting ISIL.

Russia says that it is targeting terrorists, but Russia is in fact targeting groups and individuals opposed to Al-Assad's violent rule. Just yesterday, Reuter's reported a very credible study of Russian strikes, which showed that 80 per cent of the targets that Russia has hit are located outside of ISIL control. By attacking non-extremist groups, Russia has boosted, perversely, the relative strength of ISIL, which has taken advantage of this campaign by seizing new territory in Rural Aleppo. Since Russia began its strikes, the Syrian map has shifted in ISIL's favour. Civilians are on the move in terror, and ISIL is on the move gaining ground.

Let me be clear. Aiding and abetting Al-Assad's military as it targets the very groups that we need to bring to the negotiating table will only prolong the conflict and push a political solution further from reach. This conflict will not end until Syria is free of Al-Assad. Supporting him now only ensures that, by the time a political transition is negotiated, ISIL will only be stronger — its recruitment having been bolstered by the actions of Russia, Iran and the regime — and the Syrian State will only be weaker, the country more fragmented, and the heartbreak for families across the country more widespread.

Peace in Syria cannot be secured overnight, any more than the fear that clouds Jerusalem today will immediately dissipate. We hope that tomorrow's meeting between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov will result in Russia's recommitting, in words and in action, to a political solution for Syria based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). At the same time, we call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to take every possible measure to reduce tension and restore calm on the ground. Throughout the region, a return to political dialogue represents the only real path through these darks days of terror and fear.

Mr. Marican (Malaysia): On behalf of my delegation, I thank you, Sir, for convening and chairing this meeting. Malaysia highly values your presence here today, which clearly demonstrates the importance that Spain places on the subject of today's open debate.

I wish to also warmly recognize the Foreign Ministers of Jordan, New Zealand, Venezuela and Palestine, and thank them for their presence here today.

I appreciate the in-depth briefing given by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson.

We also associate ourselves with the statements to be delivered by the representatives of Iran and Kuwait on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

The untiring efforts of the Secretary-General in his recent visit to the Middle East region in a bid to steer the parties towards peace and to return to meaningful negotiations based on the two-State solution are highly appreciated, by Malaysia in particular. We strongly support the goal of the two-State solution. However, we are increasingly becoming sceptical that the best way to achieve that goal is only through direct bilateral negotiations between Palestine and Israel. Twenty years since Oslo, the possibility of achieving a two-State solution based on direct bilateral negotiations appears more remote than ever. The continuing expansion of illegal Israeli settlements and the construction of the illegal apartheid wall by Israel, as well as the increasing radicalism on both sides, have perhaps irreparably damaged any possibility of two States existing side by side in peace and security.

Let us recall the history. In 1947, the Trustee Power in the Middle East decided to refer the problematic Palestine Mandate to the United Nations after it had been severely tested and had grown weary of years of fighting a bloody guerrilla war with Jewish paramilitary organizations. These organizations perpetrated terror and violence by targeting British interests and even civilian infrastructure in their bid to achieve statehood. The unwillingness of both sides, the Palestinians and the Jews, to come to an agreement essentially forced the Trustee Power to resort to the United Nations. In response, the General Assembly subsequently decided to partition the disputed land, creating the State of Israel.

Now, over six decades later, in an ironic and tragic twist of logic, the international community declares that Palestinian statehood can be achieved only through direct bilateral negotiations with Israel, the occupying Power. Furthermore, there are some of us who do not want the Security Council, let alone the General Assembly, to play any substantial role in realizing the two-State solution. If we had applied the same standard to Israel and insisted for the past 70 years that it could come into being only via direct bilateral negotiations with its Arab neighbours, would the State of Israel

exist today? Yet today, Palestine's attempts to access the same legal, diplomatic and multilateral channels are derided as unilateral and counterproductive measures that would jeopardize the so-called peace process.

If the principal players are sincere about salvaging the two-State solution, there is a need to do away with old thinking and habits and to come up with bold action to achieve that end — because our past approaches have proved that we have miserably failed. For too long now, every time violence erupts in occupied Palestine, the approach by the international community, including the Security Council, is to scramble to shore up the ruins of the peace process. Then we dangle whatever we can muster in front of the Palestinians, as bait to pacify them so that their frustration and anger soon subside, in the false hope of a successful initiative. Once the situation in occupied Palestine returns to calm, the world will again forget about the plight of the Palestinians, who will continue to languish in inhumane conditions under occupation until they lose their patience once again and the next cycle of violence erupts.

Albert Einstein once said that insanity was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. After two decades of failed attempts, let us stop fooling ourselves that this approach can still work. It is foolhardy to wait several more decades before we finally muster the political will and courage to do what is right and just for Palestine.

The majority of the Member States in this Chamber, including those around this table, have at one time or another fought for self-determination from colonial Powers. Based on our own historical experiences for self-determination, perhaps we should step back and try to understand the message that we have been sending to the Palestinians all this while. Effectively, what we have been saying to them is: "Obey the occupying or colonial Power, despite the grave injustice, discrimination, the lack of freedom and human rights violations done unto you; lay down your arms and do not fight the occupation, because doing so would amount to terrorism or anti-Semitism; do not proceed with any legal or diplomatic means for statehood, because it might anger the occupying Power into not granting you independence; wait patiently for your statehood, even though the occupying Power is changing the realities on the ground to make your statehood ultimately impossible; and, most of all, stay moderate and subservient at all times, despite losing your children and babies, your parents, your spouses

and your siblings due to the illegal targeting or disproportionate use of force by the occupying Power, even if there is no accountability for the perpetrators". I really wonder how many of us in the Chamber and around this table, with our own history of legitimate struggle for self-determination, could pass the standards that we are currently insisting on for the Palestinians.

The continuing occupation of Palestine and the systematic oppression suffered by its people serve as a powerful unifying factor that has inflamed radicalism and extremism globally. We certainly do not condone the terrorism and violent extremism perpetrated by the likes of Daesh and Al-Qaida, which manipulate the plight and suffering of the Palestinians. But can we reasonably expect the long-suffering, oppressed, humiliated and subjugated Palestinians to remain passive when all legal, political and diplomatic means of resistance have been effectively blocked for decades? Even Malaysia — a non-Arab country in a region culturally and geographically removed from the Middle East, with a moderate majority-Muslim population — is not spared from increasing radicalism due to frustration and anger at the suffering of fellow Muslims in Palestine.

A whole generation of Palestinians has grown into adulthood since Oslo knowing only occupation, blockade, repression and violence. If the occupation continues, we will eventually reap what we sow, and one day we will wake up to realize that peace and the two-State solution are no longer within our reach. It is therefore in the international community's interests to act urgently to address the root causes of the conflict and to end Israeli occupation. I wish to echo the sentiments expressed by my colleagues around the table and by the Secretary-General on the need to re-establish a political horizon and to return to a meaningful peace process. In that regard, we strongly support and welcome all peaceful initiatives to resolve the long-standing conflict and revive the Middle East peace process, including the initiatives by France and New Zealand. Nevertheless, Malaysia would stress the need to set a reasonable time frame to achieve the two-State solution. The Council has various tools at its disposal for the maintenance of international peace and security that it could use to achieve that aim.

Malaysia firmly supports the request by Palestine for United Nations protection, including by deploying temporary international observers in occupied Palestine. We have numerous precedents for such United Nations

protection to guide us in our deliberations. I urge the Council to start serious discussions on the request for United Nations protection, in close cooperation with the Secretary-General. I strongly believe that United Nations protection would provide a way forward to stem the current debilitating violence, in line with international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions. That would ensure accountability for all parties to the conflict and enforce adherence to international law, international human rights law and the various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, we are hopeful that the Council will agree an outcome for this open debate that would manifest our solidarity with regard to the gravity of the situation on the ground. Should the Council remain paralysed, rendering itself irrelevant as far as the Middle East peace process is concerned, we must be prepared to look beyond the Council for a solution. We must not give up all diplomatic efforts and let the occupation continue in perpetuity.

The international community must continue to uphold the legitimate right to self-determination, which has constituted one of the core principles of the United Nations since it was created 70 years ago. We owe it to the Palestinian people to mobilize our political will and explore the other peaceful, legal and diplomatic avenues available to us in order to end the longest occupation in modern history. With that I reiterate the position of my country that, if we do not act, there is no doubt that we will be condemned by history and we will face a bleaker future.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by expressing our thanks to Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, and in particular on the Palestinian issue. Based on his briefing, we have to acknowledge the frustration resulting from the prevailing situation and the inability of the international community — in particular the Security Council — to provide a real, meaningful contribution towards a solution for this painful conflict in the Middle East and in Israel.

The current dangerous escalation of violence between Israelis and Palestinians and the tragic loss of life are indeed unacceptable. The recent events in Jerusalem, with escalating tensions around the holy sites in the city, are very dangerous developments with the

potential for far-reaching consequences, which should be avoided by all means. We strongly urge the Israeli authorities and security forces to uphold the status quo in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound to avoid aggravating tensions and religious sensitivities and causing more resentment. It is always very difficult to put an end to religious wars. They are very costly in human lives.

Indeed, the participants in the debate have provided constructive contributions, which, if taken into account, could change the way we address this issue, in particular the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and statehood. In this regard, the Oslo Accords offered a unique opportunity and were a beacon of hope for putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Failure in moving this forward was catastrophic, and the restrictions under which the Palestinians live today are greater than those of 1987, when the first Intifada broke out.

We wonder whether the periodic waves of confrontation are not a deliberate long-term strategy by extremist circles in Israel to undermine the possibility of a two-State solution. On one hand, Palestinians face desperate living conditions and increased restrictions on freedom of movement in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. On the other hand, there is ongoing settlement expansion in the West Bank, in violation of international law but endorsed by Israel's authorities, under the protection of Israel's security forces. This reality cannot persist forever. As we have witnessed in the past forty years, it is usually followed by periodic waves of violence, as is currently observed in Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, these outbreaks of violence, beyond the horrendous consequences of loss of life and physical destruction, have always resulted in the additional loss of Palestinian land, increased restrictions and brutal repression against the Palestinians. The most worrisome development in the last few weeks is that both Israelis and Palestinians have abandoned the hope of negotiations for ending the crisis and bringing about a lasting solution to this conflict. The failure of the peace process — which, we have to acknowledge, is a collective failure of the international community — will weaken the mechanisms in place for managing tensions. Indeed, mechanisms like the agreement between Israeli Defense Forces and the security forces of the Palestinian authorities are less and less viable, since negotiations with Israel no longer offer any realistic prospects for ending the occupation itself. It is therefore the Security Council's duty to overcome our differences, forge a

consensus and do our utmost to revive the peace process by setting parameters for negotiations and for a final status agreement. This has been reiterated by several participants in the debate this morning.

It is imperative that the peace process be reinvigorated in order to end the occupation and achieve a just and lasting solution on the basis of two States, living side by side and in security. In this connection, Angola welcomes the visit of the Secretary-General to Palestine and to Israel. We also welcome the proposed plan for a meeting of the Quartet in Vienna tomorrow. In order to achieve some results, we urge all sides to put an end to the violence, as it undermines legitimate Palestinian aspirations for statehood and Israel's longing for security.

To prevent further territorial expansion and guarantee safety for both the Palestinian and Israeli people, Angola strongly supports the request for United Nations or other international protection for the occupied Palestinian territory, in the interest of preventing further escalation of hostilities. This would be a clear and tangible manifestation of our support for the two-State solution, which we have reiterated several times in this Council.

The atmosphere in the Middle East is reaching a boiling point, and we may be engulfed in a conflict that will have global repercussions. To avoid this, we must resolve the Palestinian question as soon as possible by facilitating the creation of a viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel. We need to go beyond the historic raising of the Palestinian flag, which we all witnessed here at United Nations in recent days. This was a significant political statement by the Palestinian Authority, but it is, unfortunately, too little too late, as the events we are now witnessing demonstrate.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): This debate is taking place at a time when any spark of unilateral action or any new incident can lead to an explosion of violence, shutting off the little that remains of the window of opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement to the conflict. Today, we are witnessing what actions — such as illegal settlements, evictions and demolitions, provocations, stabbings, acts of terror against civilians or a disproportionate response from security forces — can cause. In his briefing, earlier today, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson noted the numbers of people killed and injured on both sides. These numbers continue to grow. Lithuania strongly

condemns all acts of violence, which have resulted in injuries and loss of human life. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to account. Our deepest condolences to the families affected. We wish full recovery to those injured.

Palestinian and Israeli political, community and religious leaders must stand firm against terror, violence and incitement. They must clearly and firmly denounce all such acts and call for calm and respect for each other. Further inflammatory rhetoric, distortion of facts and violence — verbal or physical — will only bring more violence, pain, death and despair and will make the hope for living in peace and security even more remote.

All provocations, including at the holy sites, must cease immediately. All holy sites must be protected. The Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount is a sacred place for both Muslims and Jews, and it is vital to ensure that its status quo is respected. We welcome the repeated reassurances by Israel's Prime Minister regarding respect for the status quo of the holy sites and encourage further concrete steps to reaffirm it, working in close cooperation with Jordan.

Gaza needs urgent reconstruction and economic development. An immediate and unconditional lifting of the closure and a free flow of people and goods, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns, are required for effective humanitarian relief and recovery. We see Gaza as an integral part of the future State of Palestine and call for genuine Palestinian reconciliation.

The latest outbreak of violence reminds us once again that the current situation is unsustainable. The political establishments and people on both sides must finally understand that it is peace and not confrontation that is in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians. This week, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, in her meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, urged both sides to do everything within their power to curb the escalation of violence and restore calm. Lithuania calls on the political leadership of both sides to do everything they can to stop incitement, end impunity and guarantee respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. The political leaders have an obligation to protect innocent civilian lives. We call on both sides to engage in direct talks to calm the tensions.

The international community, including the Security Council, the United States, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the Quartet and regional actors, must play their role in supporting both parties in their efforts aimed at creating the conditions to make meaningful negotiations possible. We welcome the very timely visits to the region by the Secretary-General and by United States Secretary of State Kerry, as well as the meeting of the Quartet scheduled for tomorrow.

For the conflict to end, there is no other way but an immediate resumption of peace negotiations with a view to reaching a final political settlement — based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the road map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative — of two democratic and sovereign States living side by side within established borders, in peace, security and mutual recognition. A peaceful and just settlement of the conflict would have a stabilizing effect on the entire region. We call on all the relevant actors to take immediate, courageous and bold steps in that direction.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The situation at present in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has again spiked quite seriously. There is a need for immediate steps to de-escalate the situation, to attenuate the fervency of the rhetoric on both sides and to promote rejection of all forms of violence. We hope that this will be helped by renewed diplomatic efforts, including the Secretary-General's negotiations in the region and the imminent ministerial-level meeting of the Quartet in Vienna, which will be held on our initiative.

An exit from the current cycle of violence would be helped by a visit to Israel and Palestine by the special representatives of Quartet. The Russian initiative to organize a Security Council mission to the region remains relevant. The Security Council must more clearly focus on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. However, fundamental change will not occur unless, in parallel with efforts to overcome the present crisis, a renewal of political prospects for resolving final-status-related issues and for implementing the two-State concept based on a universally recognized international legal framework, namely, the Quartet road map, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, does not also take place.

The strategic task remains the same: resuming direct negotiations between Israel and Palestinians in order to address the gamut of final-status-related issues. We are convinced that only the creation of a Palestinian State living in peace side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders can guarantee Israel's security and the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Progress towards that objective requires a rejection of settlement activities. The most important issue on the agenda is the problem of restoring Palestinian unity on the platform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Neither violence nor terrorism stands to bring us any closer to a lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue on the aforementioned terms.

We believe that only through combined efforts of the international community will we be able to stabilize the situation in the countries of the Middle East. The situation requires prompt decisions. Chaos and anarchy, resulting to a large extent from foreign interference in regional affairs, is being actively exploited by terrorist organizations, first and foremost by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), whose evil plans are being implemented in Iraq and Syria, and are slowly coming to light in other countries, with the aim of creating a transborder Islamic caliphate. It is regrettable that this international army has been joined by fighters from many States around the world. The situation has simply become intolerable.

That is why, pursuant to a request by the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic for military assistance in its fight against ISIL and other terrorist groups active in Syrian territory, the Russian Federation initiated, on 30 September 2015, air and missile strikes on terrorist formations and facilities in the country. Collective approaches are needed to eliminate the terrorist threat on the basis of norms and principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

To solve this pressing issue, we should lay aside non-essential political differences. The Russian Federation has circulated a draft Security Council resolution whose main objective is to close our ranks and work to achieve the aforementioned objectives. We urge all to come and join constructive work on our proposal. The main thing in this regard is to review the near-sighted policy of rejecting a joint fight against terrorism as reflected, in particular, in a rejection of a joint determination of targets, including facilities whose destruction would weaken the military capacity of ISIL and other terrorist organizations.

I would remind the Council that the Russian initiative on Syria is two-pronged. It proposed closing our ranks for counter-terrorist purposes and, in parallel, the launching of a political process on the basis of Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). In that context, we back the efforts of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura and urge the opposition to form a representative delegation to participate in thematic intra-Syria working groups.

A lasting settlement of the situation in Syria is the objective of our contacts forged at the very highest levels with representatives of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan, Iran and other key players. The lack of alternatives to a political settlement was confirmed during the meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, on 20 October in Moscow. In that context, we continue to stress that Russia stands ready to make its contribution not only to fighting terrorism, but also to promoting the political process, so that Syria can become a country where security and stability and the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups prevails.

We attach great importance to the upcoming meeting in Vienna on 23 October of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. We hope that this format will in the near future be joined by other States, in particular Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

We backed Special Envoy for Yemen Ahmed's efforts aimed at moving the situation into the political field and the launch of the intra-Yemeni dialogue for a lasting settlement. We call for an immediate end to violence, in the light of the tragic humanitarian situation in the country. It is our shared obligation to put an end to the long-standing suffering of the Yemeni people.

The well-known events of 2011 have led to the collapse and splintering of Libya and turned the country into another hotbed of tension in the Middle East and North Africa. The situation is being exploited by ISIL, which has announced its presence through horrific vandalism. The waves of instability are travelling southward through the Sahara and the Sahel, as well as northward across the Mediterranean and into Europe. The situation in Libya and other hotspots in the region have given rise to a migration crisis that is tragic in scale.

We urge all sides in Libya to act responsibly and form a Government of national unity and join together to fight terrorism. The Russian Federation, mindful of its historical links with the States of the Middle East, will continue to make a robust contribution to restoring stability, normal life and sustainable development to the region.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by conveying my gratitude to the Spanish presidency for having organized this public debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General, for his briefing. I welcome the presence among us of Ministers for Foreign Affairs who have travelled so far specifically to participate in this meeting. My statement will focus only on the Palestinian question.

Today's debate is taking place at a moment when an upsurge of violence has raged across East Jerusalem and the West Bank as a result of the incursion by Israeli extremists on the esplanade of Al-Aqsa Mosque. The renewed deadly acts of violence serve as a pointed reminder that the status quo can no longer be sustained, with its litany of repression, deprivation and frustration that only further poisons the already explosive situation.

We would like to reiterate our strong condemnation of all forms of violence, regardless of the perpetrators, and to call upon all parties to exercise calm and restraint. In that respect, we welcome the recent visit to the region by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his commendable efforts to encourage the parties to ease tensions, thereby avoiding further deterioration of the situation. We hope that renewed diplomatic efforts, particularly the upcoming meeting of the Quartet, will help to douse the flames and lead to a resumption of dialogue.

It would be wrong of us to overlook the deep-rooted sense of frustration and the lost hopes of the young Palestinians who are expressing their anger in the face of the continuing, unending occupation of their country and in the absence of any political prospects that reflect their legitimate aspirations for a viable, independent State.

Among the main factors causing the deadlock in the political process and the fanning of the flames of tension and anger are the expanded settlement policy, the illegal expropriation of land, the demolition of housing and the building of housing units, arbitrary

administrative detention and indiscriminate repression, among other things. Added to that is the impunity enjoyed by the occupying Power, and the inability of the international community to accomplish anything. The indiscriminate repression of innocent civilians and the daily humiliation inflicted on the Palestinians only serve to add oil to the fire and further entrench the most radical positions.

In a region already torn by a number of crises and threatened by terrorism, it is in the interests of the entire international community, including Israel, to find a rapid and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. To that end, the international community must spare no effort in diffusing the violence under way and to give a glimmer of hope to the Palestinian people for a credible political process, with a deadline, that will make the two-State solution a tangible reality. In that respect, international public opinion, and the Palestinian people especially, hope to see the Security Council put less store by declarations of intention and focus more on concrete action aimed at protecting civilians and putting an end to the occupation.

The Palestinian people have waited for too long. Their suffering is enormous, as they await the resumption and hypothetical conclusion of the political process. Chad therefore wishes to express its full backing for the idea of placing the holy sites in Jerusalem and the Palestinian people under international protection.

The grave violations committed against innocent civilians must be subjected to an independent international inquiry, aimed at bringing the perpetrators to justice. To do so, the Security Council must immediately assume its full responsibility vis-à-vis all parties, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and its own relevant resolutions on the Palestinian question, which have remained dead letters since their adoption. The already undermined credibility of the international community as a whole depends on that.

Despite failing to take on its responsibility to implement the two-State solution, the Security Council cannot continue to deny the Palestinian State the right to join the United Nations as a full-fledged Member, within its pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. There is no alternative to the two-State solution. I would like to refresh the Council's memory with the reminder that Israel was created through General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 29 November 1947.

By way of conclusion, I would like to pose the same question as that posed by the Minister of Malaysia: Why is it that what was possible for Israel back in 1947, is not possible for Palestine in 2015?

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): We want to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which provides ample opportunity to reflect on recent developments in the Middle East. We also want to acknowledge the presence of the Ministers and to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his profound and inspiring briefing. And we express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, not only for his personal involvement but especially for the moral voice that he has lent to the search for peace in the Middle East.

The surge in violence and senseless killings in the occupied Palestinian territory, so well articulated by speakers before me, is deeply troubling. What began as clashes around the holy sites has spilled over into multiple locations in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank. It is a clear manifestation of the extent of the escalation. Indeed, fears have been expressed that if the situation is not contained, the rise of a third intifada might not be far-fetched.

We condemn the indiscriminate killings in the strongest possible terms. They are unjustifiable, they are immoral and they are self-annihilating. Extremists on both sides must not be allowed to dictate the political agenda, as that will provide fuel for the conflict and further complicate the search for peace. Provocative actions and hostile rhetoric must be avoided, and political leaders on both sides must take the lead in ensuring that calm is restored. We believe that a crucial element of that is the maintenance of the status quo around the holy sites.

It must be stated that recent developments must not obscure the underlying problem in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As is widely acknowledged, the underlying difficulty is the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. We would like to see a genuine effort on the part of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to negotiations directly.

The current situation does not offer a sustainable solution to the question of Palestine. Indeed, it is creating despair among the people of Palestine and causing anxiety among the people of Israel.

It cannot be overemphasized that the two-State solution lies at the heart of the Middle East peace

process. Continued settlement activity by Israel greatly undermines that. It is evident that the two-State solution has the support of the international community. It is also widely acknowledged as the path to lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. We urge all concerned to demonstrate their commitment to the two-State solution by immediately ceasing the construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian Territory. We call on all States with influence over the contending parties to encourage them to reengage in dialogue on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the existing agreements between them. We reaffirm our unwavering support for a two-State solution with Israel and Palestine existing side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Spanish presidency of the Council for the organization of this ministerial meeting on the situation in the Middle East. I also wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

This meeting, following the public meeting last week (see S/PV.7536) and the Council's exchange yesterday with the Secretary-General directly from Amman, as well as the numerous diplomatic efforts that all of us have made, again demonstrate how serious the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is and the extent to which our mobilization is necessary.

We face an especially alarming escalation of violence in the Middle East, which sadly has been growing worse on the ground. France, I wish to emphasize, strongly condemned the violence of the recent weeks, whoever the perpetrators. The toll in terms of victims, wounded, suffering and frustration is especially heavy. That deadly spiral is the concrete result of an impasse in the peace process, especially from the threat posed by the continued settlement policy, which is illegal under international law, impacts on the viability of a two-State solution and fuels both despair and violence. It constitutes an obstacle to the aspirations of both parties, namely, the creation of a Palestinian State and the right of Israel to live in security.

While some have urged us to postpone the issue when faced with an international agenda replete with other crises, we have been working tirelessly in recent months to propose solutions to break the vicious cycle

of violence in the Middle East. The current situation highlights the validity and need for such proposals as well as the need to stay the course. The time is not right to fold our arms. We need to assume our collective responsibility, and France, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a friend of both the Israeli and Palestinian people, intends to assume its responsibilities. In that spirit, we have insisted for a long time on the need for a collective mobilization to find a lasting political solution to the conflict. Despite the proliferation of crises in the region, we have remained true to the conviction that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must remain an international priority. Not only are the parameters of a solution to the conflict well known, but moreover, the lack of a settlement remains a powerful recruitment argument for terrorism in the region and remains a factor in the destabilization of the region. We cannot run the risk of Daesh seizing the Palestinian issue, with all of its unimaginable consequences.

It is the responsibility of the international community and the Security Council to find a response to the conflict. As a priority, we strongly urge the parties to redouble their efforts to promote a calming of the situation by refraining from any acts or words that could stoke the violence. Maintaining the 1967 status quo for the holy sites in Jerusalem is an imperative, as underscored yesterday by the Secretary-General. France would like the Security Council to make its voice heard — its unanimous voice heard — to preserve the status quo and restore calm. Again, that is our responsibility.

At the same time, we must rededicate ourselves towards allowing a political solution to emerge on the horizon. We must work together to support the resumption of a credible political process to serve a two-State solution. That is the thrust of our initiative, alongside that of the Quartet, for renewed international support for the peace process. That drive is aimed at fully involving Arab and European partners to support a settlement of the conflict. We intend to continue on that path. The absence of any political prospect serves no one. The two-State solution can be the only response to the conflict. France remains mobilized and prepared to work to that end with its partners and to support the actions of the United Nations.

Allow me to say a few words on Syria. On 17 August, the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2015/15) represented, after four years of

deadlock, a glimmer of hope for the emergence of a settlement of the Syrian crisis. We thought that the Security Council was finally ready to tackle the root causes of the evils ravaging that country and to advance three main, among several, priorities, namely, to fight more effectively against terrorism and against Daesh in particular. It is Daesh we need to strike, not the moderate opposition. We need to implement a real political transition, and we need to bring a response to the horrors experienced by the Syrian civilian population.

The past few weeks—this is an understatement—have not given us concrete hope and have instead given us new reasons for concern. France and its partners have repeated untiringly that backing Mr. Bashar Al-Assad to combat the terrorists is a false solution, which will do nothing more than strengthen Daesh and prolong the tragedy. That equation will never work because it precludes Syrians from coming together against terrorism. It fuels Daesh propaganda and will ultimately increase its attractiveness. That would be not simply a moral error, but it would be a strategic error, for which the Syrian people, the entire Middle East and beyond will have to pay the price. The fate of the Syrian people cannot be limited to an alternative to terror or a dictatorship based on bloody repression or barbarous terrorism.

The root causes of the Syrian tragedy must be tackled at its source, which requires a political transition that can lead to national reconciliation. What we should seek is already included in the June 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex): a Government enjoying full executive authority and which brings together both the elements of the regime and the elements of the opposition who reject terrorism. We know what the main parameters and objectives are as well as who the main players of such a transition are. We should not resign ourselves to the current impasse. Rather, we should continue to back the efforts of the Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to engage in discussions and negotiations with all parties and to determine the outline for an orderly solution.

With more than 250,000 dead and more than 10 million displaced persons and refugees, Syria is the stage of the worst human tragedy of the early twenty-first century. Against the backdrop of that chaotic situation, the immediate responsibility of the Council should be to effectively protect the civilian population. It is the Syrian authorities who have the responsibility

to protect their population. However, the regime, now heavily supported from the outside, is using its military resources, including air assets, to terrorize and kill civilians, in continued violation of its obligations under international law and Security Council resolutions.

Entire areas in Syria are currently under indiscriminate fire, including by the use of barrel bombs. Everyone knows the horrible nature of those actions, which strike indiscriminately and which, to quote Mr. Staffan de Mistura, bear the sinister “hallmark” of the Bashar Al-Assad regime. Barrel bombs are not defensive weapons. They are weapons of terror, weapons that fuel the displacement of individuals and, ultimately, the flows of refugees towards neighbouring countries and towards Europe. It is the immediate responsibility of the members of the Security Council to take steps to effectively halt the use of such ghastly weapons in Syria. France, along with Spain and the United Kingdom, will soon make concrete proposals to its partners to achieve that objective.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile reiterates its deep concern at the new cycle of violence that has been unleashed in Palestine and Israel and East Jerusalem. We especially condemn the intentional burning of the Tomb of the Patriarch Joseph as well as the bombing of the Beersheba Central Bus Station. Those events are turning point in the resurgence of the crisis.

We understand the fear that has gripped much of the Israeli public. But the peace and stability to which they aspire will not be achieved through the securitization of the problem. The solution cannot lie in stronger security measures, home demolitions or punitive measures that violate minimum standards of procedure and the right to fair and dignified treatment.

We are concerned that some Palestinian young people, owing to the frustration and lack of opportunities resulting from the occupation, are taking the path of violence to make their demands heard. At this critical point, it is imperative to address the root causes of conflict. The political horizon leading to a two-State solution must be restored; this is a realistic alternative that would allow both peoples to coexist peacefully. The parties must commit themselves to that solution in word and in deed, freezing the construction of and dismantling settlements, as well as putting an end to and rejecting any inflammatory rhetoric. In particular,

we call upon the leaders of both peoples to prevent extremist positions from hijacking the political agenda.

The current spiral of violence should lead the members of the Council to relaunch the process of dialogue. To that end, it is vital to create conditions that promote trust between the parties. Any effort in the quest for areas of convergence must include the aspiration of Palestine to exercise its right to self-determination, as well as the due security safeguards required by Israel. We believe that faithful compliance with the agreements reached and established practices regarding the use of and visits to the Temple Mount are key to reducing current tensions.

Finally, we take note of the letter sent yesterday by the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council with regard to the request made by President Abbas for the establishment of an international protection system, transmitting a report setting out a historical review of precedents in the area of protection.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I welcome the briefing from the Deputy Secretary-General, and I welcome the Secretary-General's ongoing visit to the region.

"We are all human beings; we are all equal". Those are the words of Uri Rezken, an Israeli man who was stabbed last week. Yuri was attacked in a supermarket while working side by side with an Arab colleague. His assailant was an Israeli, but, as Uri said afterwards, "It does not matter if an Arab stabbed me or a Jew stabbed me — a religious, Orthodox or secular person. I have no words to describe this hate crime".

Uri is just one victim of the continuing violence and terrorist attacks across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. To his story we can add countless others, from Palestinians, from Israelis and now from an Eritrean man, Haptom Zerhom, who, like Uri, was a victim of mistaken identity. Like Haptom, too many of these victims are now unable to tell their own story.

All of us in the Council understand the frustration at the lack of progress towards peace. But we must send a clear and unwavering message today that neither frustration nor anything else can possibly justify these attacks. There are no words to describe these hate crimes.

The British Government strongly condemns all acts of violence and incitement, no matter who committed them. We are clear that the parties need to agree on

the status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, Temple Mount, and commit to it. They need to tackle incitement, which fuels violence and hostility. Both sides need to do all they can to end the violence. If it does not stop, it will only drag the parties further away from the solution that we all want.

The Council must also play its role in de-escalating the situation and in driving forward political progress towards a lasting solution. This means increasing efforts to find practical improvements on the ground. This is vital if we are to preserve the viability of the two-State solution.

Without progress in three areas, I fear that we will see only more violence. First, Gazans must be able to secure jobs and build their livelihoods. This means the free movement of people and goods; it means immediate practical measures from Israel to develop water and energy infrastructure; and it means Palestinian factions pushing forward with reconciliation and making the reconstruction of Gaza a priority.

Secondly, progress is desperately needed, too, in the West Bank. The transfer of authority over Area C to the Palestinian authority, as the Oslo Accords set out, is critical to successful two-State solution. It could unlock huge economic benefits. Immediate progress towards this would not only improve the lives of thousands of Palestinians, it would also help restore much-needed faith in the peace process.

Thirdly, as my Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu last month, the expansion of settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes must stop. They are illegal under international law; they erode faith in the two-State solution; and they erode the physical viability of the Palestinian State.

We remain convinced that a negotiated two-State solution is the only way to resolve the conflict. It is the only way to see a safe and secure Israel coexist alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian State. The United Kingdom will continue to work towards this urgent priority in the Council and elsewhere.

A long-term political settlement, one that ensures a safe future for all, is exactly what we want elsewhere across the Middle East. In the interests of time, I will not discuss today Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen or Libya; instead, I will focus on Syria, where, tragically, the prospects are deteriorating. The number of refugees

has increased to 4 million, and tens of thousands are crossing into Europe to avoid barrel bombs and other violations of human rights. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and terrorist groups continue to pose a threat both in the region and beyond.

To have a long-term response to the migration crisis and to the threat from ISIL, we must tackle the root cause. Make no mistake: the root cause in Syria is the brutality of the Al-Assad regime. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians with barrel bombs and the use of chemical weapons have caused 12 million Syrians to flee their homes and have left a quarter of a million dead. So the United Kingdom, with France and Spain, will circulate shortly concrete proposals designed to bring to an end the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs.

The Council has always been united on the need to find a political solution in Syria. Together we supported the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and voted in favour of its principles. But now Russian military intervention on the side of Al-Assad is assisting the targeting of moderate armed groups. Such actions only diminish the prospects of a political process. Some of the groups targeted are the very ones that Staffan de Mistura had invited to join his talks. Russia has undermined the constructive relationship that we built in the Council when we came together to make some progress on chemical weapons and humanitarian issues.

Russia's decision to target moderate armed groups will only prop up Al-Assad and undermine peace, for Al-Assad's brutality remains ISIL's greatest recruiting sergeant. Al-Assad has shown that he cannot be a partner against ISIL. And in deciding to take part in Syria's civil war, Russia will now have to defend its actions to the Council and, indeed, to Sunni communities across the world, and it must use his influence to get the regime to stop its worst excesses and acts of brutality.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Spain for its initiative to hold this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, and we welcome the presence of Foreign Minister José Manuel García Margallo here in New York to preside over this meeting. I listened carefully to the briefing given by Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson.

On 24 October, the United Nations will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of its founding. Regrettably, however, no hope has been seen for a solution to the Palestinian issue, which is at the core of the issues of the Middle East and has persisted since the founding

of the Organization. The Palestinian-Israeli security situation continues to deteriorate, with frequent bloody incidents resulting in increasing civilian casualties and threatening to further escalate and spread the conflict. This situation is not acceptable. The international community should take prompt action to alleviate the situation. In that respect, China would like to emphasize the following five points.

First, the international community should urge Palestine and Israel to exercise restraint, keep calm and put an end to all rhetoric and actions not conducive to easing the tense situation so as to avoid further escalation of the conflict. China highly appreciates the current good offices of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the Middle East and welcomes the promise made by the Palestinian side to investigate crimes committed during the clashes. It hopes that this will help reduce violence and conflict. We urge Israel to avoid excessive use of force and honour its commitment to maintain the status quo of the holy sites and put an end to its violations of the rights of the Palestinian people to create the basic conditions for the two sides to sit down to seek a solution to the issue.

Secondly, the establishment of an independent Palestine and a situation in which the two countries of Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace is the correct way out of the impasse, and peace talks are the only feasible and practical means towards that end. The leaders of Palestine and Israel should put the fundamental interests of their peoples and the overall goal of maintaining regional peace and stability above all else and make political decisions to push for the gradual settlement of the issue. Israel should take the lead to show good will in taking actions favourable for the resumption of negotiations. The reasonable security concerns of the countries in the region should also be addressed.

Thirdly, the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should therefore actively respond to the reasonable requests of Palestine and the Arab countries by taking the actions necessary to put an end to the clashes between the parties and resuming the peace talks.

China welcomes the case studies initiated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, at the request of Palestine, and his report (S/2015/677) to the Security Council with regard to international protection by the

United Nations for the Palestinian people, and hopes that the Security Council will carefully consider it.

Fourthly, the settlement of the Palestinian issue requires the collective efforts of both Palestine and Israel, as well as the international community. China hopes the potential of the existing mechanisms of the Middle East peace process can be further tapped with strengthened communication and synergy among the Quartet, the countries of the region and major international partners so as to strengthen the momentum for the resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel and to find together an effective remedy for the current Palestinian-Israeli situation.

Fifthly, efforts should be made to improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine. Currently the rebuilding of Gaza faces many difficulties. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in the face of multiple challenges, such as the blockade by Israel, the unstable Palestinian-Israeli situation and the serious shortage of resources. China urges Israel to cooperate with international relief efforts and completely lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip. We hope the international community and donors will honour their assistance commitments as soon as possible to increase the support to Gaza in order to improve the humanitarian situation there.

China has always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people for the restoration of their legitimate national rights and has always promoted peace and facilitated negotiations. In 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward a four-point proposal for settling the question of Palestine. It emphasized that peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel is the right direction to take to settle the issue between the countries with the establishment of an independent Palestine.

Peace talks represent the only realistic path towards reconciliation between Israel and Palestine.

Principles such as land for peace provide an important basis for promoting the Middle East peace process, and international support constitutes a necessary guarantee of progress in the peace talks. China will maintain communications and coordination with all parties concerned in an unremitting effort to push for the easing of the Palestinian-Israeli situation and the resumption of peace talks.

In the 70 years of the history of the United Nations, we have witnessed many wars in the Middle East and the displacement of innocent civilians. The combination of national disputes and religious and ethnic conflicts have resulted in conflicts and wars, humanitarian disasters, migrant crises and the threat of terrorism. The history of the Middle East has repeatedly demonstrated that no use of force can settle such issues definitively. Hatred will only dash the hopes for peace. In today's world, no country can enjoy absolute security for itself on its own or find stability in the instability of others.

President Xi Jinping of China, during his participation in the general debate (see A/70/PV.13) in September, fully elaborated on the idea of building a new type of international relations based on win-win cooperation, with an emphasis on building partnerships in which countries treat each other as equals and engage in consultations with a mutual understanding to create a security architecture featuring fairness, justice and joint contributions.

China is ready to join the international community in a common effort to find the way out of the crisis in the Middle East and to achieve peace, stability and development at an early date.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are a number of speakers remaining on the list. With the consent of the Council, I therefore intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m.



Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7540th meeting

Thursday, 22 October 2015, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. García Margallo (Spain)

Members:

Angola	Ms. Jorge
Chad	Mr. Mahamat Zene
Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
China	Mr. Liu Song
France	Ms. Bergeon-Dars
Jordan	Mr. Omaish
Lithuania	Ms. Gleveckaitė
Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
Nigeria	Mr. Aliyu
Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Hickey
United States of America	Mr. Wagner
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Ms. Rodríguez Gómez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to remind all speakers to kindly limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing, and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber in order for us to work more efficiently. I would also like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that the interpretation can be provided accurately.

I now give the floor to Mr. Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Mr. Brende (Norway): Mr. President, I thank you for this initiative. It is a very important meeting. With the ongoing war in Syria and its escalating humanitarian consequences both in the region and in Europe, it is with deep concern that we have witnessed the vicious cycle of escalating violence and tensions in Israel and Palestine during the past weeks. The process of finding a negotiated end to the conflict by establishing two States living side by side in peace and security is stuck. The two peoples now live side by side in fear, anger and distress.

I would like to make three observations.

First, I welcome all efforts to promote calm, encourage restraint and prevent actions that further exacerbate tensions, in particular around the holy sites in Jerusalem. But more needs to be done. I call on every politician, community elder and religious leader to refrain from reckless and inflammatory statements and actions; reject the extremists who pursue a political agenda to turn the current situation into a religious conflict; condemn all acts of terror; and show respect for the sanctity and the dignity of the holy sites. I welcome commitments to maintaining the status quo at the holy esplanade. Security coordination between Israelis and Palestinians must continue. Like every other State, Israel has the right to take necessary measures to protect its citizens against violence and unprovoked killings. At the same time, measures construed as collective punishments, such as house demolitions, should stop immediately, both in Jerusalem and on the West Bank, as they feed violence.

Secondly, I call for a return to a credible political process. While tensions at the holy sites in Jerusalem instigated the current crisis, lack of hope for a better

political future contributes to increased frustration and anger among the Palestinian youth. No amount of frustration justifies violence. Still, the crisis cannot be resolved through de-escalation and security measures alone. The current tensions call for immediate and coordinated political steps by both sides. Israel should stop building new settlements on occupied land and expanding existing ones. Such building undermines any political process and turns hope into frustration, anger and rage. Palestine needs to reform and strengthen its political institutions and governance structures. In particular, the West Bank and Gaza need to be reintegrated into one authority that fully respects the parameters of the security agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Thirdly, cooperation on tangible measures to strengthen the Palestinian economy and the reconstruction of Gaza can pave the way for the political process. Last month, I chaired the meeting of the donors group, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, here in New York. The donors reiterated their continued commitment to supporting the establishment of capable and robust Palestinian institutions and a viable economy. Measures need to be undertaken in the West Bank, Gaza and Area C. Unresolved issues related to the Paris Protocol need to be resolved without delay. Donors cannot be expected to compensate for unresolved economic issues between the two parties. I urge the donors to increase their support.

It is clear, however, that no donor support can substitute or compensate for inadequate measures by the Palestinian Authority or by Israel themselves. Also, achieving the full potential of a Palestinian State with well-functioning political and governmental institutions, including a sustainable economy, requires a political resolution of the conflict. I therefore welcome the interest expressed by both sides in doing more and in working harder together to improve the Palestinian economy and reconstruct Gaza.

Direct economic cooperation is no substitute for a political process, but may help to build stability and establish better grounds for the political process. While the parties themselves hold the keys to resuming talks, the international community needs to engage and support them in a concerted manner that can bring the conflict to a resolution. Business as usual cannot continue.

I started my statement by referring to Syria. To facilitate a more coherent and better funded response to

the humanitarian needs, Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom and Kuwait are cooperating to convene a donor conference next year. We hope that, while we struggle to find a political solution to the conflict, we can develop ways and means to better face the humanitarian challenges.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Attiah (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We congratulate you, Sir, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council and thank you for presiding personally over today's meeting and for the invitation to participate in this debate at a time when the Middle East region is heading into an extremely grave situation. We also wish to thank Spain for its role in promoting peace in the region and Mr. Jan Eliasson for his briefing.

The Council is meeting today to consider the situation that is unfolding as a result of the serious escalation in the activities of the Israeli Defense Forces against the Palestinian people. Anyone who has followed the situation knows that the situation is the result of the occupation, with its illegal settlements, its discrimination against the Palestinian people, its violation of their rights and basic freedoms, its denial of access to natural resources and its stifling economic blockade. The Palestinians are currently the object of crimes committed by Israeli extremists, who act with impunity.

The Palestinian people have taken to the streets yet again in order to express their rage for reasons that are perfectly understandable. They are a people whose land has been occupied and who are subjected to humiliation daily. Their land is constantly being usurped and confiscated in order to build settlements. We can all bear witness to that, and today we are here to discuss a question of major importance that weighs heavily not only on the shoulders of the Arab and Muslim peoples but that unites all the world's democracies. It has been impossible to resolve the dispute, because the international community is not prepared to impose a just solution. The Palestinian people are being held hostage to the balance of power between the occupying Power and the occupied people.

Negotiations have therefore lost their value. Talks have not been held on a continuing basis, and Israel has adopted the practice of annexing forcibly occupied land in Jerusalem and in the Golan. The Gaza Strip has been

under siege for years, and wars have been unleashed against anyone who resisted. Finally, there are those who are bent on blocking access to the holy sites in Jerusalem, which could even lead to the division of the space. Those groups are an integral part of the Israeli Government.

The Palestinian people take to the street to be heard, not because they seek mercy or pity. The Palestinian people have dignity. They are the original population. They take to the street to say that they reject humiliation and occupation and that they do not accept the international indifference that has allowed a just cause to go without response for decades. Apartheid is over, but in Palestine, for all intents and purposes, it is on the verge of being restored. Here, I would like to point out that the generation that has taken to the streets and that is being subjected to summary executions is demanding a solution based on the 1967 borders before it is too late. The elements on the ground presage terrible results.

The people of the region are facing a new tragedy that risks exacerbating the question of Syria, which is an international question. Despite the suffering of the Syrian people, the international community has not attempted to resolve it. The international community has proof of the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, and there has been a mass exodus of people, yet the regime remains in place, because no one has put an end to its excesses.

We have discussed the matter many times but no one has replied to the question of why we have not provided protection to Syrian civilians or why we have not succeeded in protecting them. I do not think there is a convincing answer to that question. We continue to speak about combating terrorism. We all face that danger, and we must all work to combat it, but the Syrians believe that the main problem is State terrorism. Unfortunately, opposition to the Syrian regime no longer rests simply on the fact that it is a criminal regime that commits crimes against humanity. Now it is a matter of seeing whether or not there is a point in combating terrorism. That is exactly what the Syrian people were afraid of. What we need to do today is to agree again to implement the Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex), establishing a transitional authority with the executive power to address the demands of the Syrian revolution while preserving that country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. Such a solution would spare the world the dangers of terrorism.

Now we must seriously address the task of finding a solution to the destructive mechanism that has led to the total destruction of Syria and turned its people into refugees in our countries and all over the world. We can testify to the gravity of the situation just by counting the number of victims. The situation in Syria is a tragedy that will remain etched in human memory. Unfortunately, the international community has chosen to respond based on self-interest. We used to believe that the solution for Syria should, above all, be a political one, but have we asked ourselves what we have done to improve the situation and whether we have acted with courage to protect those who need our protection? By that, I mean the Syrian people and none other.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): I thank Spain for organizing this timely meeting and Foreign Minister García Margallo for presiding over it. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his strong remarks and strong message to us this morning.

I welcome the Secretary-General's visit to the region, and, as he said in Jerusalem earlier this week, the terror attacks against civilians are deplorable. Such random attacks make every place unsafe and every person a potential victim. We are, of course, deeply concerned about the deaths on both sides, with nearly 2,000 injured so far in October, a vast majority of whom were Palestinians. The Israeli response must be proportionate. All perpetrators must be brought to justice and excessive use of force must not be used. There is an urgent need for leadership, responsibility and restraint.

One year ago, Sweden decided to recognize the State of Palestine. Our recognition aimed at making the parties to the conflict less unequal. It aimed at supporting moderate Palestinians and Israelis alike, providing a positive input into the dynamics of the dormant Middle East peace process and at sending a clear and convincing message of hope to younger generations that there is an alternative to violence and to the so-called status quo. As we have seen in recent weeks, the absence of hope is one of the greatest challenges facing the prospect of peace and the vision of a two-State solution.

But we believe that it is not too late for initiatives for de-escalation, confidence-building and peace in the region. It is time to create conditions for a results-

oriented peace process, including confidence-building measures such as settlement freezes. Now it is time for the full implementation of agreements reached between Palestine and Israel. Now is time to end the isolation of Gaza and for all factions in Palestine to cooperate. Now it is time to remove obstacles to economic development in all of Palestine, including that of limited access to Area C and Gaza. Now it is time for an international recommitment regarding clear parameters and realistic time frames for negotiations and an end to the occupation. We must not lose track of the real goal: a negotiated two-State solution and an end of the occupation where both Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace and security, and the Council should lead the way.

The recent escalation of the violence in Syria is deeply concerning, and the present situation, more than ever, calls for the complete, genuine and concrete support of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and a political solution. That humanitarian crisis is the world's largest in modern times, and my country, Sweden, shoulders its responsibility in three ways.

First, we are currently receiving 3,000 Syrian refugees every week, and to date we have received 100,000, although I know it is a small number compared to the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Secondly, Sweden has so far contributed over \$213 million in humanitarian assistance. Thirdly, in addition to our humanitarian assistance, Sweden will allocate another \$220 million over the coming five years, through a new Syrian crisis strategy. I want to encourage all others present here to also step up their engagement. I know that many are already doing a lot.

Throughout the conflict in Syria, women and girls have been targeted on the basis of their gender. Sexual violence is systematic and widespread among many warring parties, including its use as a tactic of terror by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. But Syrian women are not only victims; they are also actors. That is why I am hosting a meeting on Syrian women peacebuilders tomorrow morning. It is important to look upon women as actors of change who want to be given a voice in any discussions about the future of Syria.

Lebanon is one of the countries most affected by the conflict in Syria. Domestic stability in Lebanon is key, and Lebanese leaders need to set their differences aside and elect a new President without any further delay. But Lebanon also needs and deserves more international

support. Lebanon, led ably by Prime Minister Tammam Salam, is hosting more than 1.2 million refugees who have fled the war in Syria. Our substantial humanitarian assistance and our contribution to the Trust Fund for Lebanon, managed by the World Bank, will soon be complemented by increased development assistance. I strongly encourage others to follow suit.

As already mentioned, the vicious cycle of direct and indirect violence has to be broken. Security cannot be achieved through bombs or rockets, war or violence, humiliation or threats. Genuine security can be achieved only through peace. We need to take our responsibility. We owe that to the children and future generations in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and other countries in the region. We need to restore the hope of a better future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Maldives.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): It is an honour to speak before the Council today on the question of Palestine. It is an issue of profound importance to the Government and people of the Maldives. I would like to extend my thanks to Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain and President of the Security Council for the month of October, for convening this timely debate on the question of Palestine. My delegation wishes to further express our sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his recent visit to the region, which is yet another in a series of visits, in continuation of his tireless efforts in search of peace.

In two days' time, we will be marking the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. The United Nations has been a force for good for all humankind. It has helped in ending conflicts and in making peace. It has saved millions of people from oppression, colonialism and military occupation. Yet the United Nations has been helpless in ending Israel's subjugation of Palestinians. Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestine epitomizes a deep malaise in the international system that we have to address.

For decades, the international community has sought the realization of a two-State solution, reaffirmed by United Nations resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Oslo accords, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. Those efforts attempt to succeed against a system of institutionalized occupation and apartheid that tries to alter the mindsets of generations who have grown up under occupation and whose reality is one of

fear, hatred and violence. Those efforts have failed a people, a nation, a region and the entire international community.

The recent violence that has broken out in Jerusalem and across the occupied territories paints a bleak picture. In the past weeks, we have seen violence and counter-reprisals escalate sharply. That the Old City of Jerusalem has been shut to Palestinians is a clear illustration of the gravity of the current situation. The sanctity of the Haram Al-Sharif must be restored. Granting Palestinians their rightful access is a first step to further the peace process. Israel must stop altering the Islamic and Arabic character of the city.

Every year, thousands of Israeli settlers move into the occupied territories illegally. The combination of increasingly belligerent political rhetoric and the enforced physical and demographic changes to the occupied Palestinian territories continually reduces the chances for peace. That window is steadily closing. The Secretary-General, on his latest trip to the occupied Palestine, highlighted that, when he said: "What is missing is the resolve to restore a political horizon for talks and a political process that delivers real results and hope".

It is a sad reality that today there is an absence of hope and that despair has grabbed hold of a people who have nothing left to lose, and that conditions for further violence are being fermented. It is no coincidence that the second Intifada broke out six weeks after the collapse of the Camp David summit, nor is it an accident that violence broke out last summer following the collapse of the United States-led peace effort. In the absence of hope and in the face of oppression, there is only violence and hatred. Such hatred has bred extremism, fostered radicalism and consumed the entire region.

The Maldives has repeatedly called for the community of nations to be more vigilant in addressing the issues of borders, refugees, settlements and Jerusalem in the quest for a comprehensive and sustained peace. The Maldives reiterates its support for full recognition of an independent State of Palestine within its pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We have underscored the importance of greater involvement on the part of the international community, particularly the Council, in the settlement of a negotiated peace.

The Maldives urges the Security Council to fulfil its primary responsibility for maintaining international

peace and security. We urge it to take the firm measures that are needed to end Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine and its apartheid practices there. It is time that the Council demanded an end to the illegal occupation and to the oppression of the Palestinian people. The United Nations must take the lead in steering the peace process from passive rhetoric to pragmatic action. The right to live life in peace is as much one for each and every Palestinian as it is for each of us here today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Rodríguez Pineda (Guatemala): My delegation appreciates the presence of Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, in today's debate, and is grateful for the Deputy Secretary-General's informative briefing.

Guatemala is extremely concerned about the current situation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel and, especially, Jerusalem. The situation has been complicated by the increase in direct clashes between Palestinians and Israel's security forces, together with the expansion of settlements and the forced displacement of Palestinians. Such violence undermines the possibility for finding a political horizon that meets the legitimate needs of both peoples and can enable them to reach a just and final settlement. We believe that that can be achieved only through the establishment of a Palestinian State coexisting in peace with Israel, and not through the commission of violent acts. It is essential that any measure designed to maintain peace and security in the region take that ultimate goal into account. The walls and checkpoints, the violent responses from the security forces and the demolition of homes, along with violent attacks by individuals and groups and rocket fire, are not things that will help to solve this conflict.

The most urgent challenge we are facing is to halt the spiral of violence and preventing any further loss of life. We are particularly concerned about the repeated provocations that have occurred in the holy sites of Jerusalem, as well as the disproportionate actions that have been taken in that context. It is vital that political, community and religious Palestinian and Israeli leaders stand firm against terrorism, violence and incitement. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's the rapid response and his visit to the region to ask the parties to stop the violence.

Whatever happens, the current crisis cannot be resolved by adopting security measures. The unending occupation and Palestinians' reduced prospects for their aspirations to establish a State also increase frustration and despair, while the severe economic situation, including the high unemployment in the area, exacerbates such feelings. Similarly, the continued and increasing expansion of settlements diminishes hope and the potential for a viable Palestinian State. This loss of any political prospects is the single most detrimental factor contributing to the violence we are seeing.

The only thing that can break this cycle of violence and fear is the establishment of a political horizon. We hope that the Security Council can redouble its efforts to create conditions conducive to a resumption of meaningful negotiations. In that regard, we join with the various calls that have been made to find mechanisms that will enable us to relaunch the political process. Similarly, we recognize the value of the principle of shared responsibility, and in that regard, we believe that the active diplomatic participation of the Quartet in the Middle East peace process can generate new momentum for the parties to take responsible steps towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. We also see the benefits that could result from an expanded Quartet that includes other key actors in the region.

This is a good moment for us to rethink how we can make progress and conclude the peace talks that can enable us to work on measures aimed at confidence-building and promoting Palestinian reconciliation, issues that are critical to ensuring that the parties commit to peace. We cannot stand idly by. However, it must be the parties themselves, those with a principal interest in reaching a mutually satisfactory solution, who must commit to making a real and renewed effort. It is they who must strengthen their confidence and commitment to the option of peace and coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, side by side in peace and security.

In conclusion, Guatemala acknowledges the enormous challenges that lie ahead, but it is our political and historical responsibility as members of the international community to support every possible means and effort to overcome them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is indeed alarming. According

to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the past two weeks have witnessed the highest number of fatalities and injuries in the West Bank since 2005. That in itself not only justifies the call for this high-level debate, which we would like to thank Spain for organizing, it also calls for swift action by the Security Council.

Since the beginning of this month, on average two Palestinians have been killed every day, and more than 1,000 have been injured, not to mention the increasing number of attacks by settlers on Palestinian property. Israeli provocations and assaults at the Haram Al-Sharif have continued, in an obvious attempt to change the agreed status quo by establishing a temporal if not geographical division of the holy site, contrary to the claims of Mr. Netanyahu.

Israel, the occupying Power, is once again acting in total disregard of its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law to protect civilian Palestinians. That is why we are once again calling on the Council to use all possible ways and means at its disposal to ensure the protection of the endangered lives and property of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, pending its assumption of its full duty and responsibility to end the Israeli occupation and help the Palestinian State to achieve its independence.

The events of the past month are only the tip of the iceberg of the occupation, which has now lasted almost 50 years. In fact, the need to provide international protection for the Palestinians who are under Israeli occupation is self-evident when we recall the fate of the most vulnerable Palestinians, the children living under occupation. We have only to note that, between 2000 and 2013, one Palestinian child was killed by the Israeli occupying forces every three days, and that 62 per cent of the 95,000 Palestinian children detained by the Israelis since 1967 have probably been subjected to some form of physical violence. And how can one omit to mention the case of the two Palestinian children who were recently burned to death by extremist Israeli settlers — 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh, who was killed in July in an arson attack in Douma, and Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a 16-year-old Palestinian, who was kidnapped, beaten and burned alive by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem in August 2014.

Notwithstanding such acts of appalling savagery, Benjamin Netanyahu, in total contempt for our intelligence, dared to claim in his latest speech before the General Assembly that "Israel is civilization's front

line in the battle against barbarism" (A/70/PV.22). Moreover, instead of facing the reality of the occupation and its inherently oppressive structure and repressive methods, Israeli officials and their propaganda endeavour to represent the mounting violence in the West Bank and Gaza as an eruption of so-called terrorist hatred, motivated by nothing else but pure anti-Semitism and bloodthirsty Islamic fanaticism.

I am sure that we all recognize a familiar situation here — that of blaming the victim. We are reminded of William Ryan's famous book, *Blaming the Victim*, a 1971 classic that shows how victim-blaming functions as an ideology that is used to divert responsibility and to justify racism and social injustice. In fact, blaming the victim is so odious that it was rightly depicted by one of the great twentieth century thinkers as "one of the most sinister features of the fascist character".

In Israel, like elsewhere, racism is not only blind, it is also deadly. We only have to consider how on Monday, Halom Zarhum, an innocent Eritrean asylum seeker fleeing the scene of acts of violence, was shot, then lynched. That dismaying attack is documented in videos in which an angry Israeli mob is shown hurling benches and chairs and kicking him in the head, assuming he was an Arab terrorist just because he was dark-skinned, all the while screaming things like "Death to Arabs!" It is worth asking Mr. Netanyahu whether that is another example of Israel as "civilization's front line in the battle against barbarism". Obviously, we do not have the same lexicon as Mr. Netanyahu, because, in our lexicon, racism and xenophobia, let alone acts of burning people alive and lynching, are examples of barbarism and not of civilization.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is very alarming. Not only can the Council prevent the situation from deteriorating, it can also unlock the path to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, provided that it resolves to act on the basis of the principles and rules of international law and international humanitarian law. Here, to seek balance, where no balance exists or can exist between the occupier and the occupied, is not justice. It is not even a travesty of justice, it is injustice, plain and simple. Conversely, pending the end of the Israeli occupation, the Council can and must move now to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, the sooner the better, for the relevance of the Council and, above all, for the just cause of peace in our part of the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate Minister José Manuel García Margallo on his delegation's assumption of the presidency during this month of October. We are confident that the work of the Council will be successful in this period of escalating developments that are having a serious and negative effect on the Middle East.

Since the beginning of this month, the situation in holy Jerusalem, in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Haram Al-Sharif, has deteriorated quickly and is threatening to worsen. After decades of occupation and suffering and the frustration of their hopes to establish an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, the Palestinian people find themselves in a painful situation. They are still under Israeli occupation and have to deal with the shortsighted security policies of the longest occupation in history, with no prospects for a decent life in the near future. Statistics indicate that the unemployment rate among the young people in Jerusalem is approximately 68 per cent, and 44,000 housing units are in danger of collapsing.

In addition to the violence committed by the settlers and their attacks on the dignity and physical safety of the Palestinian people and the confiscation of Palestinian land, particularly the holy sites, which are extremely important to more than 1 billion Muslims around the world, there are ongoing attempts to change the spatial and temporal character of all Islamic holy sites. That is an extremely dangerous attack, not only on the occupied Palestinian territories but also on the Middle East as a whole. It kills hope and removes any prospects for settling this issue.

Egypt strongly condemns all violence committed in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in Jerusalem, by the Israeli side and its use of incommensurate and oppressive means in dealing with the situation, which has led to deaths and injuries, including among children and women. It considers the actions committed by the settlers against Palestinians to be crimes that can only fuel feelings of hatred and dissension. The situation requires serious consideration by the Council. The international community as a whole, and the Security Council in particular, are under a serious obligation to take the necessary action as soon as possible to address those threats to peace and security in the Middle East. The Security Council should uphold

its responsibilities, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, given the many important resolutions that have not been adopted so far. The reasons for that failure to act are known to all and include attempts by certain parties to protect the Israeli occupation, even though it is morally and politically unjustifiable. The failure to act prevents the Palestinians from receiving protection, and that threatens further escalation of tensions in the near future.

In order to safeguard its credibility, the Security Council must to adopt the necessary resolutions and adopt a firm approach in applying principled diplomacy, so as to reach the desired objective of settling the Palestinian question. That should be carried out within the context of a peaceful process that takes into account all important aspects, including the approaches to a final solution, which have been under consideration for more than two decades. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, and the Council should tackle the situation immediately, so that Israel does not have more time to continue devouring Palestinian territories despite the condemnation of the international community. Egypt believes that the Palestinian people have the right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that is the only way to achieve stability in the Middle East.

We therefore support all efforts, particularly those of Jordan, aimed at addressing the Palestinian question, in particular efforts to contain the current crisis at the holy sites, stop the fighting and discourage any provocative incitement to violence. We call upon the Israeli Government to take history into account, particularly in Jerusalem, and put an end to all attacks on Islamic holy sites and give priority to resuming negotiations, the freezing of which has led to the current serious escalation.

The Palestinian question is the most important issue for the Arab world. Any additional procrastination will further complicate the crisis; the time to deal with it is now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I wish to convey the Movement's appreciation to the Spanish presidency and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. José Manuel

García Margallo, for convening today's open debate. I also wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his briefing.

In these days of tragedy that starkly remind us of the continuing plight of the Palestinian people resulting from the denial of their rights and the grave injustices inflicted upon them for decades, the Non-Aligned Movement takes this opportunity to reaffirm its long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterates its support for the realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, together with a just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

Today, the situation in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate, as a result of Israel's crimes and violations against the Palestinian people. More than 49 Palestinians, including children, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces, and more than 1,800 Palestinians have been injured, many severely, by the live ammunition and other weaponry used excessively and indiscriminately by the occupying Power against the defenceless civilian population under its occupation. That situation requires immediate attention by the international community, in particular the Security Council, which must act to bring a halt to all such violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, committed by the occupying Power, which is further destabilizing the situation and threatening international peace and security.

The Movement strongly condemns all acts of violence and the provocations and incitement committed by the Israeli occupying forces and extremists at the sensitive holy site, which threaten to further destabilize the already fragile situation with far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. NAM believes that the continuation of Israel's illegal settlement campaign, which is at the core of the 48-year foreign occupation, remains the major obstacle to peace, undermining all efforts to resume a credible peace process and casting serious doubts on Israel's alleged commitment to ending its foreign occupation of Palestinian land and achieving the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

NAM calls once again upon the international community to act collectively and forthwith to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destructive and illegal practices and abide by all its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Security Council, in particular, must uphold the duties assigned to it by the Charter to address the situation and act with urgency to implement its own resolutions, respond to those critical developments and advance a peaceful solution based on United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The current dangerous situation, including in occupied East Jerusalem, cannot abide further delay or aggravation. The time to act is now to save innocent civilian lives, including by providing protection to the Palestinian people, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, and to revive the gravely diminished prospects for peace.

The Security Council cannot remain on the sidelines in the quest for a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. NAM again urges the Security Council to act resolutely and forthwith to end the plight of the Palestinian people and the Israeli occupation, support the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and establish peace and security by resolving this prolonged conflict, which has so severely destabilized the region and undermined international law and the international system as a whole.

Lebanon continues to suffer from continuing Israeli violations of its borders and incursions against its territory, along with years of occupation and aggression. Unfortunately, Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace and has been intensifying its incursions over Lebanon. Such activities are a blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and the relevant international resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006). The provisions of that resolution should be implemented in a manner that ensures the strengthening of the foundations of stability and security in Lebanon and prevents Israel from undertaking its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement condemns all measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, which have intensified since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis.

The Non-Aligned Movement demands once again that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar de Patriota (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the presidency of Spain for having organized today's debate.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing. Brazil wishes to acknowledge the statements made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Mr. Riad Malki, and by the Permanent Representative of Israel. The Secretary-General's trip to the Middle East was timely and underlined the sense of urgency that the issue at hand deserves.

Brazil is seriously concerned about the severe upsurge in violence in Palestine and Israel. We call upon the authorities of both countries to do their utmost to halt the current escalation. It is about time for the Security Council fully to assume its responsibilities under the United Nations Charter and actively support and steer the peace process towards a two-State solution.

Unfortunately, we cannot say that this tragic deterioration was unexpected. Many delegations, including Brazil, have repeatedly called for an end to illegal and provocative actions, in particular the expansion of Israeli settlement activities. The spontaneous and mostly uncoordinated nature of the many violent incidents does not render them justifiable.

Taking into account the present disturbing state of affairs, Brazil deems it important that the international community respond to the request made by President Mahmoud Abbas by carefully examining different modalities for international protection. We also believe that the United Nations membership at large should discuss alternative approaches to engage the parties in negotiations and support avenues leading to a peaceful solution to the conflict that is based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Brazil remains convinced that effective prospects for peace require the establishment of a Palestinian State that is sovereign, economically viable and territorially contiguous, side by side with Israel within

internationally recognized borders based on the 1967 lines.

The spiral of violence and destruction in Syria continues to worsen, leading to a continuous deterioration in the humanitarian situation, despite the general recognition that there is no military solution to the conflict. A genuine and inclusive dialogue based on full respect for human rights and the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria is as urgent as ever. We reiterate our support for the work of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura as well as the Human Rights Council's international Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria, headed by Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro.

Brazil condemns in the strongest terms the use of any toxic chemical as a weapon and firmly supports the establishment of the joint investigative mechanism by the Security Council. The attacks against the civilian population, including the use of barrel bombs, are inhumane and intolerable. Brazil urges all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

We applaud the work done by the United Nations agencies to help the millions of people in need and the generosity of many countries in the region which have been receiving the bulk of Syrian refugees. Brazil is contributing to these humanitarian efforts. We have issued more than 8,000 entry visas for Syrian residents affected by the crisis and provided food and medicine through United Nations agencies to help alleviate the dire situation faced by refugees and displaced persons in the region. We will continue to welcome, within our capacity and resources, those who have had to flee their home country and need a place to restart their lives.

We are glad that in Yemen the Government of President Hadi Mansour has agreed to participate in a new round of consultations, under the auspices of the United Nations, in order to seek understanding on how to put an end to the conflict. Brazil supports United Nations efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table and engage them in the process of seeking a diplomatic solution without any further delay.

Brazil is united by both historical and cultural ties with Lebanon, where peace and stability must be firmly upheld by the international community. We underscore the instrumental role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, whose Maritime Task Force has been led by a Brazilian navy admiral since 2011.

We urge all Lebanese political actors to embrace the path of understanding and end the presidential vacuum without further delay.

The dire humanitarian situation in Libya and the negative impact of the Libyan crisis on regional stability requires our continued attention. We call on all parties to the Libyan conflict to cease hostilities and favour dialogue by remaining engaged in constructive political negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to achieving a Government of national accord.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Elaraby (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Sir, and the Spanish presidency for having convened this very important meeting, which is taking place at a time when the Middle East is facing serious challenges and threats of all kinds, for which the Security Council is responsible at the political, legal and moral levels, given current developments and their serious impact on the peoples of the region.

However, the Council is not adopting any resolutions to tackle these very serious crises in the region, either in Palestine or in Syria. It must also face the threat of terrorist groups, which have turned the region into a breeding ground from which to spread their influence, while threatening both the region and the independence and sovereignty of States. This requires a review of the Council's mechanisms and of the resolutions it has adopted, as well as their follow-up and the commitment of States to abide by them.

Given the explosive situation in the region, the Palestinian question remains the central issue on which peace and security in the Middle East hinge. For decades now, the Council has continuously considered the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, given the ongoing escalation and the serious violations committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people and their rights and against the holy sites of both Islam and Christianity, in particular Al-Quds and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Unarmed Palestinians are the victims of massacres, lynchings and collective punishment. All of this represents a violation of international law, the will of the international community and the inalienable legal rights of the Palestinian people. The Israeli Government is solely responsible for the impact of these actions, which have

jeopardized international peace and security in the Middle East throughout the occupation.

I am speaking today on behalf of the League of Arab States, which adopted a decision on 13 October asking for the protection of the Palestinian people and the holy Christian and Muslim sites. This is not the first time that the League has asked the Security Council to take urgent steps to implement resolutions on the occupied Palestinian territories and guarantee international protection for the Palestinian people and the holy sites.

I ask, how long will the Israeli occupation last? Until when will the international community, represented by the Security Council, stand idly by, unable to put an end to the occupation or achieve a lasting and permanent settlement on the basis of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on this issue?

The lack of effectiveness and efficiency of the Council given current developments only aggravates the deterioration of the situation, taking it ever further away from international legality. The Council of the League of Arab States has repeatedly warned against the situation and the non-respect by Israel of United Nations resolutions on the issue. A great many of these have been adopted over the past 50 years, such as, for example, resolution 181 (II), 242 (1967), 267 (1969), 338 (1973) and many others asking Israel to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories in order to resolve the conflict.

The Security Council has never witnessed such a precedent, in which manipulation and blackmail by a State that disregards international law and commits war crimes is allowed. Ensuring international protection has now become the most urgent question, as this is a legal requirement given the situation and the need to achieve the peace to which we aspire. The need for international protection for Palestinian civilians is stipulated in the provisions of international legality and resolutions on Palestine.

Since the emergence of the Palestinian question, in the days of the League of Nations when the territory was under a mandate, the situation has been the responsibility of the international community.

The International Court of Justice, in a well-known Advisory Opinion issued in 1950, stipulated the following:

(spoke in English)

"Two principles were considered to be of paramount importance: the principle of non-annexation and the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples, those under the mandate, formed a sacred trust of civilization."

(spoke in Arabic)

The legal study of the Secretary-General adopted yesterday refers to this, for which I thank him.

(spoke in English)

The International Court of Justice confirmed that the mandate remained valid after the determination of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

(spoke in Arabic)

This international protection through the United Nations can be easily carried out. In that connection, I recall the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), established pursuant to resolution 73 (1949), which stipulates that the Secretary-General could take all necessary steps to use as many United Nations staff members as necessary to ensure that the truce is respected. UNTSO remains in Jerusalem to this day. That body can play a role in protecting the holy sites.

In that regard, I recall resolution 904 (1994), which was adopted following the massacre in the Mosque of Ibrahim to guarantee the safety and security of all Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territories and which stipulates that there should be a temporary international presence. That is why I thank the Secretary-General for having distributed and published this important legal study, which stresses the need for international protection through a direct presence in the occupied Palestinian territories, given the recent developments.

I would also like to state that the first article of the Geneva Accord stipulates the shared legal commitment of all States, which have the collective responsibility to guarantee the compliance and implementation of the provisions of that Accord. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross, among other bodies, can guarantee international protection by elaborating on this concept.

Finally, measures aimed at protecting Palestinian civilians faced with the violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces and the settlers are essential

to addressing the current situation. However, the crux of the problem is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. As long as this occupation continues, the Israeli violations will continue, be it in Jerusalem or any other part of the occupied territories. It is high time that this method of managing the conflict be brought to an end. The Security Council must act quickly to end the conflict by halting the Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories. We ask the Council to consider the Quartet to be a Council mechanism and to consider the mandate it gave the Quartet, in accordance to resolution 1515 (2003), to achieve a two-State solution based on the borders of 4 June 1967, to be a mandatory step on the path to security and stability in the Middle East.

The President (spoke in Spanish): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

While the Middle East faces multiple challenges today, including the crisis in Syria, the Middle East peace process cannot be allowed to slip from our agenda. It is crucial for the Israelis and the Palestinians, but also for regional peace and security. The increased deadly violence in October, not least in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, claiming many lives and injuring over a thousand, is a tragic reminder of this. We deeply regret the loss of lives and our thoughts are with the victims and their families. The risk of escalation is a source of great concern. We therefore urge political leaders on both sides to promote calm, encourage restraint and avoid actions which could further fuel tensions.

Violence or acts of terror against any innocent civilian are simply unacceptable. The response of security forces needs to be proportionate and consistent regardless of who is the perpetrator. The continued cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to ensure de-escalation and the restoration of order is crucially important. However, current developments on the ground provide the evidence that the status quo is not an option. They prove the need for a political horizon. The best way of halting the violence is an immediate return to a credible political process. The immediate priority for the parties is to agree on substantial steps, which would improve the situation

on the ground and build a path back to final status negotiations.

The EU position has been clear and consistent. A negotiated two-State solution, which ends the occupation and fulfils the aspirations of both sides, is the only way of bringing the lasting peace and security that both Israelis and Palestinians deserve. By the same token, actions by either side that call into question their stated commitment to a negotiated solution must be avoided. This includes demolitions and the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law, and of projects funded by the EU and EU member States.

The two-State solution will also require Palestinian factions to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population. We therefore continue to urge them to make reconciliation a top priority. The Palestinian Authority must take greater responsibility in this regard and assume its Government functions in the Gaza Strip. The dire situation in Gaza must be fundamentally changed to allow for improved socioeconomic conditions for the local population and security for all.

Let us also not forget Jerusalem, a city sacred to three religions. The historical status quo at the holy sites, a matter of great sensitivity, must not be altered. Therefore, all relevant parties must open a serious dialogue to ensure the status quo at the holy sites is upheld.

A renewed peace process will require a common international effort. The EU remains determined to play its part, not least through the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, Fernando Gentilini. We will work with all sides, through the implementation of existing agreements, to allow Palestinian socioeconomic development and to empower Palestinian institutions in preparation for statehood.

The EU warmly welcomes the statement issued by representatives of the Quartet, dated 30 September, and their consultations with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as well as with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and other interested member States. Outreach to regional partners will remain essential, as the Arab Peace Initiative is of key strategic importance for any future comprehensive peace agreement.

The EU offers its full support to the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Mladenov. The Security Council, with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, continues to have a crucial role in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, ultimately sustainable peace will require courageous decisions by the parties to the conflict. We urge them to carefully consider the high price of a continued unresolved conflict, which will continue to be paid by local populations.

The EU continues to follow developments on the ground very closely. It remains determined to do its utmost to preserve the viability of the two-State solution in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Turning to the conflict in Syria, there is an increasingly urgent need to find a lasting solution that will end this conflict. Only a Syrian-led political process leading to a peaceful and inclusive transition, based on the principles of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of 30 June 2012, will bring back stability to Syria, enable peace and reconciliation, create the necessary environment for efficient counter-terrorism efforts and maintain the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State.

There cannot be a lasting peace in Syria under the present leadership and until the legitimate grievances and aspirations of all components of Syrian society are addressed. The international community has to unite around two complementary and interlinked tracks: a political one aimed at ending the civil war by addressing all the root causes of the conflict and establishing an inclusive political transition process that will restore peace to the country; and a security one focused on the fight against the regional and global threat of Daesh.

The European Union reiterates its full support to the United Nations-led efforts and the work of United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. We call on all Syrian parties to show a clear and concrete commitment to the United Nations-led process and to participate actively in the working groups proposed by the Special Envoy. The moderate political opposition and associated armed groups urgently need to unite behind a common approach in order to present an alternative to the Syrian people.

We urge all those with influence on the parties, including on the Syrian regime, to use that influence to encourage a constructive role in the process, leading to a

political transition and to end the cycle of violence. The EU will proactively engage with key regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and international partners within the United Nations framework, to build the conditions for a peaceful and inclusive transition.

We condemn the excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks that the Syrian regime continues to commit against its own people. The Al-Assad regime bears the greatest responsibility for the 250,000 deaths in the conflict and the displacement of millions of people. International humanitarian law applies to all parties, and human rights need to be fully respected. We call on all parties to stop all forms of indiscriminate shelling and bombardment against civilian areas and structures and, in particular, on the Syrian regime to cease all aerial bombardments, including the use of barrel bombs in line with resolution 2139 (2014). We also call for the immediate cessation of the use of chemical weapons, which is a violation of resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015). In that light, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, and stress that those individuals, entities, groups or Governments must be held accountable. The systematic targeting of civilians by the regime has led to mass displacements and encouraged recruitment to and the flourishing of terrorist groups in Syria. This calls for urgent attention and action.

We strongly condemn the indiscriminate attacks, atrocities, killings, conflict-related sexual violence, abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by Daesh and other terrorist groups. We support international efforts and initiatives to address those issues. We condemn Daesh's deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq, which amounts to a war crime under international law. Those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria must be held accountable. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

The EU supports the efforts of the Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. As a consequence of its policies and actions, the Al-Assad regime cannot be a partner in the fight against Daesh. Action against Daesh needs to be closely coordinated among all partners, and needs clearly to target Daesh,

Jabhat Al-Nusra and the other United Nations-designated terrorist groups.

The recent Russian military attacks that go beyond Daesh and other United Nations-designated terrorist groups, as well as on the moderate opposition, are of deep concern and must cease immediately; so too must the Russian violations of the sovereign airspace of neighbouring countries. That military escalation risks prolonging the conflict, undermining a political process, aggravating the humanitarian situation and increasing radicalization. Our aim should be to de-escalate the conflict. The EU calls on Russia to focus its efforts on the common objective of achieving a political solution to the conflict. In that context, it urges Russia to push for a reduction of violence and the implementation of confidence-building measures by the Syrian regime, pursuant to the provisions of resolution 2139 (2014).

The EU will reinforce its efforts to scale up the implementation of the Security Council resolutions: 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) to deliver cross-border and cross-line assistance in order to help those Syrians most desperately in need, intensify humanitarian diplomacy, seek ways to improve access and protection and promote humanitarian principles and local consensus with regard to guidelines for aid delivery.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, I should like to thank Spain and Foreign Minister José Manuel García Margallo for convening this timely open debate. Coming as we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of our Organization, it should serve as a basis to commit ourselves as an Organization to one of the most important pending issues before us — making the Palestinian State a reality and allowing its people to live in peace and security.

At the most recent Council debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see S/PV.7490), we marked the first anniversary of the latest war on Gaza. At that time three months ago, we noted the continued construction of illegal Israeli settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian land and the demolition of Palestinian houses and orchards, and called on the Council to meet and take action to

ensure implementation of its resolutions regarding the question of Palestine. We also warned that ongoing violence in a land so sacred to many peoples and faiths was particularly troublesome.

Today, the situation in Jerusalem is reverberating throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and has reached a point of conflagration that, sadly, validates our darkest fears and predictions. The despairing Palestinian youth in Jerusalem and the West Bank are desperate and being driven to acts of violence, as the only way they feel they will be heard. Israeli communities are acting out of fear, engendering a mob mentality that is adding a dangerous dimension to this current upsurge in violence.

The construction of walls between ethnically different neighbourhoods will not solve any of the problems that led to the current situation. In fact, cementing the borders of illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem will only exacerbate the conflict. The only sustainable way out is to seek a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, based on the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. That will require an end of the Israeli occupation in all its facets and the emergence of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Unless we, the United Nations, and the Council can provide both peoples with a blueprint of hope for a just solution and an end to this seemingly endless battle — for a future where both can live in peace and dignity — we will be complicit in the further deterioration of the conflict, which month after month, year after year, becomes increasingly difficult to resolve.

Three months ago, we spoke of a new international awareness that 20 years of bilateral negotiations, plagued by interruptions, had not yielded the expected result, and that a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question might need multilateral efforts. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people therefore salutes the Quartet's efforts to provide such a multilateral framework. We likewise reiterate our position that the initiative of the League of Arab States, which proposes a comprehensive peace agreement that would include the normalization of relations between Israel and the entire region, remains a historic opportunity to bring peace to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, as well as to their neighbours near and far. We urge Israel to

seriously weigh that initiative before events on the ground sweep it aside.

This year, which marks 70 years since the founding of our Organization and the fortieth year of our Committee, the Security Council should urgently assume its responsibility for ensuring that the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable rights. Failure to do so would have severe consequences far beyond Jerusalem, Israel and Palestine. If the nations of the world, united through our Organization and in the Council, wish to win the fight against violent extremism in the Middle East and elsewhere, the Council must find and implement a solution to the question of Palestine, with the formula of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Meanwhile, as an immediate priority, the Council should urgently act to guarantee the status quo with respect to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The proposal to station international observers is promising as a first step towards relieving tensions and re-establishing stability. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people reaffirms its commitment to the principle of a peaceful solution to the conflict on the basis of those premises.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al Saad (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I would like to express particular thanks to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain for the attention and importance he attaches to this question.

We meet today as young Palestinians are being killed by bullets fired by the Israeli occupation forces, and while blood continues to flow in the courtyards of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in its vicinity and at its gates. Israeli soldiers and terrorist settlers rush out to kill, destroy and burn. One of them even proudly posted a video of a bleeding Palestinian boy he had shot, while cursing the boy and wishing him dead.

Let us recall the reasons behind the acts of violence that began with repeated acts of aggression by the Israelis against Al-Haram Al-Sharif, when settlers and soldiers stormed the precincts of the Mosque without even taking off their shoes. The Israeli Government tried to impose a new pattern of spatial division and restricts access based on time slots to one of the sites

most revered by Muslims everywhere. Let us not forget that Israel has failed to protect the Islamic holy sites. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was set on fire by Israeli extremists shortly after the Israelis occupied Jerusalem. There were also repeated attempts to demolish Al-Haram Al-Sharif and to excavate beneath it with the aim of destabilizing the building or causing its collapse. Nor should we forget that Israel demolished the gates of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the protective fences around the courtyard and turned them into places of prayer for Jews without taking their sanctity for Muslims into account. Let us not forget that Israeli extremists set fire to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and attacked people at their prayers, and built a temple and a memorial to glorify the base acts of those killers.

Therefore, who can really blame the Palestinians if they mistrust the intentions of Israel and its Government with respect to the preservation and security of the Al-Aqsa Mosque or with respect to changing its historic status quo? Who can blame the Palestinians for reacting in the face of the Israeli occupation when its officials call for Israeli settlers and occupiers to fight to the death? Who can blame the Palestinians for feeling that settlers can walk into their villages and neighbourhoods like criminals and stalk their children, families and property? Who can blame the Palestinians for trying to defend themselves in their occupied towns and cities, in Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories? And who can deny Palestinians the right to seek international protection to defend their land, their sons and their holy sites?

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls on the international community once again to say no to Israeli occupation, injustice and arrogance, to end to the bloodshed and to hold the Government of the Israeli occupation legally and criminally accountable for its flagrant crimes and violations against the Palestinian people, which can truly be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity. Of that there can be no doubt. Israel must respond immediately to and abide by international decisions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also calls on the Security Council to intervene immediately to protect our children in Palestine. We appeal to the Council to demonstrate a reaction commensurate with the gravity of the situation and with the seriousness of its responsibility. The Council should not be content with issuing repeated statements. It must act courageously to grant the Palestinian people the right

to self-determination leading to the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, on the basis of the borders of June 1967, and to end tragedy that has afflicted Palestine ever since.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia views with grave concern the ongoing suffering of its brothers, the Syrian people, who continue to face an oppressive regime that bombards their villages and cities with barrel bombs and uses chemical weapons against its own people. In abdicating its own sovereignty, it has granted foreign Powers and militias, which are equally criminal, the opportunity to participate in a genocide that the regime has waged against its own people in a grave escalation that will have serious consequences in the region.

We call on all active parties to cooperate immediately in implementing the Geneva Communiqué (see resolution 2118 (2013), annex II), including the call for a transitional governing body with wide executive powers that seeks to establish a future Syria that will embrace all well-intentioned Syrians, regardless of their religious, political or ethnic affiliations. It will be a Syria that rejects terrorism, violence, fanaticism and extremism and not a Syria for those who have killed their own people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. AlJarallah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to address the Security Council today on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Kingdom of Spain on its presidency of the Security Council and the fact that its Foreign Minister is chairing today's meeting.

We meet once again in this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, at a time when the occupied Palestinian territory and, in particular, the occupied city of Jerusalem have been witnessing a dramatically deteriorating situation as a result of the escalation of Israeli military aggression against the unarmed, defenceless Palestinian people and their holy places. Israel's arrogance, disregard for international law and disrespect for agreements with the Palestinian side, as well as the total impunity that it enjoys for its violations and crimes, have brought the situation to a dangerous juncture.

On more than one occasion, the OIC — most recently on 1 October at an extraordinary meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in New

York in the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventieth session — has warned of the consequences of the continued Israeli provocations, incitement and attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and has condemned those attacks as an unprecedented assault against the inalienable religious rights of Muslims all over the world. They also constitute a violation of the freedom of worship and the sanctity of holy places. If they are not halted, they will further fuel extremism, violence and racism and contribute to igniting religious strife, endangering the prospects of peace and stability in the region.

We renew our warning once again — as the Palestinian President stated before the General Assembly three weeks ago (see A/70/PV.19) — that the continuation of Israeli aggression against Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem risks setting off a religious war, for which only Israel would bear the responsibility. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, cannot ignore those dire warnings.

We cannot talk about the recent escalation separately from its context. It follows decades of occupation, oppression and the denial of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the current escalation is continuing within the context of unprecedented levels of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, Israel's attempts to change the historical status quo at Haram Al-Sharif, and the unparalleled increase in the levels of terrorist attacks and crimes perpetrated by Israeli settlers with the protection and encouragement of Israeli forces. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation reiterates the importance of preserving the Jordanian Hashemite custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, including Haram Al-Sharif, as has been exercised by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein.

One example of Israeli crimes was that committed against the Dawabsha family. A young boy, barely two years of age, was burned alive two months ago by Israeli settlers. That reminds us of similar crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Furthermore, Israel's repeated attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque represent only one aspect of the terrorism that has been fuelled and protected by the Israeli occupation. Recent legislation adopted by the Israeli Knesset allows the occupation forces to shoot at Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied city of Jerusalem, which represents an official cover and endorsement of the criminal operations and an explicit

provision of impunity for the killing and oppression of the Palestinian people, ensuring the further loss of innocent lives and worsening the injustices committed against the Palestinian people.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation strongly condemns the policy of execution and deliberate murder carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem. Some of those acts, in which children have been targeted, were captured by media cameras. Furthermore, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemns the unprecedented escalation in the acts of violence and terrorism by extremist settlers against Palestinian civilians. Only this past month, Israeli violence has claimed the lives of more than 45 Palestinians and wounded more than 1,800 people, including women and children.

Those crimes and violations show the horrible reality of the occupation and the racist nature of Israeli policies, targeting the Palestinian people, their land and holy places. Moreover, the recent Israeli crimes and practices have exposed and revealed Israel's lies regarding its army's ethical code of conduct. How can one leave an injured child to bleed after having shot him? How is it possible that a teenager is shot only because his smile provoked an armed and fanatical Israeli settler? There is no definition for such acts other than that of shameful war crimes. The perpetrators of those crimes must be held accountable, and justice must be done. The International Criminal Court was established for such a purpose.

While the Organization of Islamic Cooperation warns against the dangers posed by the Israeli aggression to regional and international security and stability, we call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility by taking measures to stop the crimes and violations committed by the Israeli occupation. There is no doubt that the Israeli authorities consider the silence of the international community in response to its crimes to be an encouragement to continue with acts of State terrorism. That silence encourages them to commit further violations against the unarmed and defenceless Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

We renew our support for achieving peace based on the two-State solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and international norms, but we underscore that it is not acceptable to remain silent or

merely to express indignation and concern about the unspeakable Israeli war crimes, genocide and atrocities that have been committed against the Palestinian people. It is no longer possible to continue tolerating the occupation while treating Israel as a State above the law that practices terrorism and arrogance with impunity. The perpetrators of those heinous crimes should be prosecuted and brought to justice, and the foreign occupation must end.

The current serious developments affirm the call issued at the recent meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers for the Security Council to intervene earnestly and immediately with a view to providing international protection for the Palestinian people. The Council must take a decision that establishes a political path to preserve the two-State solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, and set a time frame for ending the Israeli occupation, with international guarantees and binding implementation mechanisms. We expect the Council to do its best to restore security, stability and peace, based on right and justice for the peoples of the region rather than violence, occupation and conflict, and to work towards enforcing its many resolutions that seek to ensure the Palestinian people's exercise of their inalienable and legitimate national rights, particularly the right to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great pleasure for me to see my friend, the Ambassador of Spain, presiding over the Security Council of the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

In reference to the Middle East peace process, nowhere is a political solution more overdue than in Palestine. Japan is concerned by the latest surge of violence, in particular the conflict at the holy sites, because of its potentially inflammatory implications. We welcome Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's vow to maintain the status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and Palestinian President Abbas's swift condemnation of the arson attacks against Joseph's Tomb. We call for the cessation of violence and condemn all forms of incitement, including those from Hamas.

In the light of the daily onslaught of violence, we reiterate the importance of maintaining security cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. Furthermore, while we recognize the necessity to maintain order, we call on Israel to exercise its law enforcement with proportionate measures and to refrain from collective punishment, including the demolition of homes, which may exacerbate an already volatile situation.

The current situation did not arise in a vacuum. Grim economic prospects, social marginalization, illegal settlements and the stagnation of the peace process have all served as fodder for discontent. Too often, the international community, including the Council, has remained silent. We have offered neither tangible advances towards peace nor concrete visions of a viable economy in a future State of Palestine.

The stagnation and difficulties in the peace process must not stop us from making progress when possible. Firm in our belief that a viable economy underpins the feasibility of a two-State solution, Japan has contributed \$1.6 billion in support since 1993. Through such projects as the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, which can provide up to 7,000 jobs with annual economic benefits totalling \$40 million, Japan hopes to offer real prospects for a viable Palestinian economy.

Countries with the will and capacity to provide concrete contributions to the political process and on the ground can strengthen rather than dilute the traditional framework of the peace process. We therefore value the initiative taken by the Middle East Quartet to convene a high-level outreach meeting as a side event at the seventieth session of the General Assembly. At that meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Kishida, offered additional aid totalling \$12 million and reaffirmed our commitment to play a more proactive role in the peace process.

With regard to the situation in Syria, the Syrian crisis has, over the past five years, taken more than 250,000 lives and uprooted approximately 12 million citizens. In the face of one of the worst humanitarian crises of our generation, Japan will spare no efforts to address both the immediate challenges and the underlying factors of the instability. This year, Japan will provide approximately \$810 million in assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons from Iraq and Syria. With particular attention to the Syrian crisis, Japan has already extended more than \$1.1 billion in such

assistance as relief and vocational training, with a view to empowering individuals and building communities that are resilient to the allures of extremism.

Japan condemns the rampant acts of terrorism that have taken countless lives and destroyed cultural heritages throughout the region. Such heinous acts of terror have also taken Japanese victims. We note that the situation in Syria has taken on a new dimension with the military involvement of Russia. In that regard, Japan looks to Russia to strictly limit its air strikes to those against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria. Any actions against non-ISIL forces could worsen an already volatile situation in Syria and would be a cause for concern.

We reiterate that there can be no military solution to the Syrian crisis. We therefore underline our support for the United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in his efforts to work towards a political solution, based on the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex).

The increasing volatility in the Middle East calls for concerted effort by the international community, including the Security Council, to facilitate the return of peace and stability to the region. I would like to conclude my statement by assuring the Council that Japan will continue to play a proactive role, both on the ground and in the Council, in contributing to the peace and stability of the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Paswan (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this quarterly open debate at the ministerial level on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

Our position on the Middle East peace process is very clear. India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet road map and the relevant Council resolutions. India has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral forums. We supported the recent adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/320, on raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations.

Recently, the President of India concluded a State visit to Palestine, where he met with the Palestinian leadership and discussed a whole range of bilateral, multilateral and regional issues. That visit reinforced India's strong commitment to the Palestinian cause and renewed our political and diplomatic support for the State of Palestine in its endeavours to realize an independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

Apart from giving political support to the Palestinian cause, India continues to support Palestine's development and nation-building efforts with ongoing technical and financial assistance. During a visit to Ramallah, the President of India inaugurated the India-Palestine Centre for Excellence in information and communications technology at the Al-Quds University, and handed over a cheque for \$5 million as budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. We have announced several other new projects, in addition to the important bilateral development projects in health, education, skill development and vocational training that we are currently undertaking. India contributes \$1 million annually to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, and has pledged and contributed \$4 million to the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. We are also implementing development projects in Palestine jointly with Brazil and South Africa within the India-Brazil-South Africa framework.

We are holding today's debate at yet another unfortunate time, when violent incidents and military responses to them, regardless of the reasons for them, are once again taking a toll on people's lives on both sides. We are distressed and saddened by the ongoing situation and the loss of life. We welcome efforts to mitigate the situation and urge both sides to exercise restraint, in order to reduce the levels of tension and create an environment conducive to the resumption of peace talks. India remains firmly convinced that dialogue is the only viable option for effectively addressing the issue. Restraint is imperative if provocation and unilateral actions are to be avoided and a return to the peace process achieved. We remain hopeful and urge both sides to resume the peace process as soon as possible in order to work towards a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution of the Palestinian issue.

India remains deeply concerned about the worsening political and security situation in Yemen. We have urged all the parties concerned in Yemen to resolve their differences amicably, and we hope that the mediation

efforts of the United Nations can help the people of Yemen to find a consensus-based solution.

Turning to Syria, we continue to be very concerned about the ongoing violence and loss of human life in Syria. India has consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the crisis that can bring all the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. This must be a Syrian-led process that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We also derive hope from and support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to advance the political process by conducting parallel negotiations with four sub-groups focusing on various issues.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): We would like to thank the Spanish presidency for convening today's open debate on the current, unprecedented and extremely grave crisis in the Middle East, which we hope is compelling Member States to act with a sense of responsibility and urgency. If it is not speedily addressed, the current situation in the region will destabilize security globally.

The prevailing tensions in the Middle East are primarily concentrated on the Palestinian issue, and which should begin to ease once the problems there are resolved. Kazakhstan therefore recognizes the Palestinian people's legitimate right to self-determination and strongly supports the creation of an independent State of Palestine, coexisting peacefully with Israel within the 1967 borders. We also support full-fledged membership in the United Nations for Palestine and welcome the raising of the Palestinian flag on the grounds of the United Nations Headquarters. We see a two-State solution as the only viable option for lasting peace, and we call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate the political accountability and goodwill they need to reach a historic peace agreement. We also urge calm over the situation around Haram al-Sharif.

The devastating situation in Syria, which has now spread beyond the region, is one of great concern to the rest of the world. Kazakhstan has continued to support the steps taken by members of the international community, including the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as the actions of the Syrian Government and the opposition that are aimed at

deciding Syria's political future through dialogue and reconciliation and bringing a speedy end to the violence and bloodshed. We hope that negotiations will continue between the Government and the opposition in the effort to solve the Syrian conflict within the framework of the Geneva II process. Kazakhstan believes firmly that the crisis can be resolved only by peaceful means.

We believe it is critical to establish a counter-terrorism coalition led by the United Nations, with a unified mechanism designed to defeat this scourge and bring its perpetrators and their supporters to justice. The current United Nations mechanisms aimed at countering terrorism, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, should be made legally binding through appropriate Security Council resolutions. During his address to the General Assembly last month (see A/70/PV.13), my President, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, called for strengthening the global anti-terrorist network by bringing together existing measures under the auspices of the United Nations. We call for the speedy adoption of a comprehensive document on international terrorism, which has challenged our efforts for the past 20 years. We call on all delegations to support this bold and forward-looking approach.

The growing speculation about issues between the two major denominations of Islam has little basis in reality, but tension is nonetheless increasing over the spread of extremist ideology. In that regard, my country proposes to establish an international forum entitled "Islam against Terrorism", with the aim of demonstrating religious unity in the face of the destructive nature of terrorism and violent extremism. We must recognize that the activities of terrorist groups undermine the foundations of the existing world order far beyond the conflict zones of the Middle East. The escalation of violence has resulted in more victims among the civilian population, mainly women and children, as well as the forced migration of civilians from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. This is the largest exodus of populations since the Second World War, and is of great concern not only to the European Union but also to all of us, the United Nations community.

Finally, we reiterate our robust commitment to ensuring peace in the Middle East, based on freedom and justice for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I would like to begin by expressing Indonesia's appreciation to the presidency of Spain for convening this open debate. Our thanks also go to the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing earlier today.

I would also like to align my statement with those made earlier by the representatives of Iran and Kuwait on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

This debate is very timely, being held as it is amid the increasingly worrying escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. The international community, especially the Council, must therefore do its utmost to ensure that all sides exercise restraint and defuse tension. We welcome the Secretary-General's recent visit to Israel and Palestine and hope that it will help to end the spiraling violence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

That spiral of violence has worsened the hatred and mutual suspicion among the people of Palestine and Israel that has the potential to further complicate efforts to restart the political process. With that in mind, Indonesia underlines once again that there is no feasible solution to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory other than an immediate start to a meaningful and credible peace process with a view to ending the Israeli occupation. To delay is to permit those feelings of hatred and suspicion to make the prospects of peace more intractable.

Indonesia firmly believes that a just and lasting peace will be sustainable only a through political process and when the peoples of Palestine are allowed to exercise their long-overdue right of self-determination. On that account, we stress the need of the Security Council to create a climate favourable to the resumption of the peace process. The Council must ensure that Israel remains true to its commitment to two-State solution. In this regard, all Israel's illegal activities in the occupied Palestinian territory must come to an end. The air strike on Gaza on October 11, for example, as well as continued provocation in East Jerusalem, notably in the areas of the holy sites, not only are contrary to international law but also generate more tension and anger on the ground.

Certainly, the Security Council cannot continue to sit idly by and retire to its routine activities of convening briefings and debates. We again call upon the Council to assert its Charter mandate and act

as a matter of urgency to bring an end to the Israeli occupation. The raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations weeks ago was, in our view, not only a symbolic act but also a strategic one. It was a natural consequence of the growing international recognition of the State of Palestine and its rightful place among the community of nations. It was also a necessary building block towards the eventual two-State solution.

On a different matter, Security Council must also uphold the principle of the protection of civilians in times of international armed conflict. The continued violence committed against the Palestinian people and their properties clearly underlines the urgency of securing international United Nations protection for Palestine. We therefore encourage the Council to work together with the relevant United Nations bodies to respond favourably to that urgent need.

Let me now turn to the situation in Syria. Indonesia wishes to register its outright discontent at the lack of unity of Security Council members in ending the violence and address the humanitarian crisis there, which have spread beyond the region. This organ's lack of political will to even deliberate the Syrian issue, let alone find a resolution to the conflict, demonstrates the dysfunctional nature of the Council. How many more innocent people must die before the Council decides that the time is ripe for it to act?

Indonesia therefore reminds and calls upon Council members to honour their Charter responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, to act immediately and decisively, to end unilateral actions that only complicate the situation, and bring the relevant parties back to the negotiation table to find a comprehensive and inclusive political solution. Indonesia firmly believes that this is the only way to resolve the conflict once and for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Reverend Monsignor Kassas (Holy See) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to thank the Spanish presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, which could not be more timely as the region is literally on fire.

As the entire world counts the dead, we must not obscure the plight of the wounded, the displaced and the refugees who are continually subject to great fear and apprehension, even as they flee the senseless violence in

the Middle East, which completely disregards the most elementary terms of international humanitarian law and, indeed, of humanity. This horrific picture plays out daily in the media as migrants and refugees flood the European continent, seeking some small measure of peace and security, but who are not always welcome. What of the children and the women? What of the elderly, the maimed and the handicapped? Where is the distinction between combatants and non-combatants?

My delegation believes that it has a solemn duty to remind the international community once again that extremists are seeking to eradicate religions, ethnic groups and cultures that have been in the Middle East for millennia. My delegation is deeply concerned over the plight of Christians and other groups in territories controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, in particular those who are held captive for ransom and in conditions of enslavement. The Holy See also highlights with sadness the wanton destruction of the priceless cultural patrimony of humankind in the region. Pope Francis, in his address to the General Assembly on September 25, renewed his

"repeated appeals concerning the painful situation in the entire Middle East, North Africa and other African countries where Christians, along with other cultural and ethnic groups, and including those adherents of the majority religion who have no desire to be caught up in the hatred and madness, have been forced to witness the destruction of their places of worship, their cultural and religious heritage and their homes and property, and are faced with the alternatives either of fleeing or of paying with their lives or with enslavement" (A/70/PV.3, p. 5).

Grave conflicts have been waged in the Middle East, including in Palestine, ever since the birth of the United Nations. The violence that characterizes the present situation proves that not only have these problems not been solved or gone away, but that they seem to be increasingly intractable. In recent years, other very serious conflicts, in particular the Syrian crisis, have added to the complexity of the problems in the region.

It is deeply regrettable that the Middle East — a cradle of great civilizations and the birthplace of the three main monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam — should be immersed in a situation that combines every form of conflict and every possible actor: State and non-State combatants, ethnic and

cultural groups, fundamentalist terrorism and organized criminality, religious and ethnic hatred, regional and international geopolitical rivalries. In such a context, flooding the region with more and more destructive weapons will not end the conflicts. Instead of arms and munitions, the international community needs to endow the region with more courageous, impartial and persevering negotiations and mediations.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate the Holy See's profound gratitude to those countries of the region that, in spite of their own difficult situations and limited resources, have welcomed and taken care of millions of refugees. On its part, the Catholic Church remains active at the forefront in providing, to all those in need and with all the means at its disposal, humanitarian aid through churches, schools, medical facilities, rehabilitation centers and pastoral care institutions.

My delegation calls on the international community to assist and support the countries of the region in maintaining their political stability and to mobilize the economic resources necessary to enable them to deal appropriately with the ever-increasing number of displaced persons and migrants. We also call on the international community to take action with regard to the situation in Lebanon, with a view to restoring political stability through a revitalization of the country's constitutional institutions through presidential elections.

Let me conclude by citing the words of Pope Francis in his letter to the Secretary-General of 9 August 2014:

"The most basic understanding of human dignity compels the international community, particularly to the norms and mechanisms of international law, to do all that it can to stop and prevent further systematic violence against ethnic and religious minorities and to protect innocent peoples".

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important meeting. Permit me to address the Council today as a main party in the context of this item.

On 24 October, the United Nations will celebrate its seventieth anniversary. However, the question should be: do we have the right to celebrate, and what

are we celebrating? Perhaps we do not, in fact, have that right, given that we are seeing that the aspirations of the founding fathers of the United Nations in the area of peace, security and development have come to naught because of the policies of certain influential States that disregard the principles of the Charter and of international law.

How can we celebrate when we are witnessing mass violations of the provisions of the Charter, leading to acts of aggression, instability and threats to the peace that hinder the development of relations between nations based on respect, the rights of peoples and the principles of non-intervention and of the inadmissibility of the threat or use of force against the sovereignty and independence of States? Perhaps some would say that we do not have the right to celebrate after 70 years of suffering on the part of the Palestinian people.

How can we celebrate the vision of our peoples, particularly the Palestinian people, who have a completely just case that is being undermined because the power of the law is giving way to the law of power? How can we celebrate when we see States using the United Nations as a pretext for invading other countries, toppling their legitimate Governments, killing their leaders and turning them into failed States that have become breeding grounds for international terrorism? How can we celebrate when they are changing the very definitions of concepts — for example, a certain degree of terrorism is termed “moderate terrorism”?

Perhaps we should not celebrate that some have caused the United Nations to fail to uphold its mandate with regard to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. How can we celebrate half a century of occupation, of turning Palestine into a mass prison, and of apartheid against the Palestinians, the legitimate owners of the land, in Jerusalem and other occupied territories? How can we celebrate the escalating violence and barbarism of settlers, under the protection of the Israeli Government? How can we celebrate the cancerous settlement policy that allows building on any part of the Palestinian territories?

How can we accept that some members of the Security Council have irresponsibly provided support and protection to Israel so that it can continue its provocative policies, in violation of all international instruments? How can we not deal with the question of Palestine in its factual context? Can we really be trying to project the image that this is reciprocal violence and that our differences are only over the degree of that

violence? How can we ignore the main reason for this: the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories?

Yes, in two days we will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. But on that occasion, what will the United Nations do to help displaced Syrians and those who have been living under Israeli occupation for over half a century? Indeed, the Organization has failed to take any real action aimed at making Israel implement United Nations resolutions on this issue, primarily resolution 497 (1981).

The displaced Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan have legitimate questions about the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations vis-à-vis their just cause. How could they not ask those questions, given Israel's incessant settlement activities and policies of oppression, suppression and racial discrimination? How could they not when they see Israel supporting terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida's Al-Nusra Front in the Golan region, even as the United Nations does nothing? How could they not, when they see Israel arresting the Syrian Mandela, who spent 27 years in their prison for one reason only: exposing Israeli support for terrorists?

We want to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, but we want the celebration to be meaningful, a celebration of real accomplishments, not one of words, statements or interventions. We want to realize the aspirations of the founding fathers and their dream of a world of peace, stability and prosperity, based on respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their affairs — a world that is free of occupation and colonization and in which there is no manipulation of the fate of peoples or changing their governing regimes through foreign intervention. That is what we want; that is the one thing towards which we should work collectively, so that we can hold a celebration that is truly meaningful and satisfies our consciences and the conscience of our peoples.

In conclusion, I would like to denounce in the strongest terms the desperate attempts made by certain delegations, whose names I will not mention, to defend Israel and try to cover up its crimes, particularly through desperate, Don Quixote-like attempts to bring causes before the Security Council that have no relation to the situation in the Middle East. Every time Israel escalates its aggression against the Palestinian people, we find those delegations making misleading statements that escalate the situation, with the aim of diverting attention from the crimes committed by Israel and alleviating international pressure.

For that reason, I am not going to respond to the empty claims made against Syria by those delegations, in spite of the fact that we could say much to refute their claims, as they support and arm terrorists — the artificially created moderate terrorists who are waging destruction in Syria and oppose any peaceful settlement. Those countries are intervening in the internal affairs of Syria and using the Syrian diaspora as a weapon to bring pressure to bear on the Syrian Government to force it change its positions and independent political choices.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza-García (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate the Spanish delegation on assuming the presidency for the month of October. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, for his statement.

Costa Rica has decided to participate in this open debate because of the importance it attaches to the situation in the Middle East. As a peace-loving country that has not had a standing army by its own volition for more than 65 years, Costa Rica is a firm believer in the peaceful settlement of conflicts between peoples and States in the context of international law and multilateral diplomacy. As stated by His Holiness Pope Francis, war brings destruction and multiplies the sufferings of peoples.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and especially the escalation of violence in recent months, which we vigorously condemn and in which civilians, including women and children, continue to pay a high price. During the emergency meeting convened by the Security Council on 16 October (see S/PV.7536), it became clear that it was necessary for the international community to take action because it can no longer stand by and bear witness without doing anything about this conflict. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, warned, we should ponder the serious consequences of turning this conflict into one of a religious nature. He also underscored that the Israeli occupation and the dwindling prospects for a Palestinian State have contributed to worsening the situation.

My country will never cease to urge that parties resume negotiations on the core issues of the conflict

that still exist, based on the obligations already acquired and the agreements previously agreed among the parties and supported by international law and the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

For Costa Rica, it is crucial to bring an end to the armed conflict in Syria and to seek an early political solution, especially with regard to the humanitarian crisis. We hope that it will be possible to explore the real and tangible options, as was recently stated by the United States, to achieve a political transition in Syria, whose civil war has intensified with Russia's intervention on 30 September in support of the Damascus Government against the insurgents. The extension and deepening of the conflict is causing unprecedented humanitarian effects. Every day that tensions increase, there is an exponential increase in the violations of rights and the suffering of the Syrian people.

We are pleased that, due to the ceasefire agreements, the United Nations system, together with its partners the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, has managed to deliver medical supplies in several cities in Syria. However, many people in need are still trapped without access to humanitarian assistance. That is why we urge that assistance be allowed to reach its destination and that humanitarian issues remain outside of conflicts.

One might think that at this point, and given the developments in the conflict, it would be resolved by one or two Powers. On the contrary, we believe that the Security Council is called upon to play a role in order to diversify the conversations and bring about interactions and dialogues that are different from those that have occurred around the crisis in recent weeks.

With regard to the current situation in Yemen, my delegation looks favourably on the statements made by the officials of the Yemeni Government expressing the willingness to participate in peace talks. We welcome the work Special Envoy Cheikh Ahmed has planned with Government representatives and with the Houthis and their allies to complete the preparations for the negotiations, the aim of which is to lay the foundations for a lasting peace that will benefit the Yemeni people.

For all these reasons, we hope the Security Council can fully carry out its mandate in the Middle East to maintain international peace and security and fulfil its duty to promote the full implementation of international justice and the rule of law. As reaffirmed by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Mr. Luis

Guillermo Solís Rivera, in his statement in the general debate (see A/70/PV.19) at the opening of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, to strengthen the United Nations at the epicentre of global governance, the Security Council must assume its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, take into account human rights considerations in its operations and improve its work on conflict prevention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Mahmuduzzaman (Bangladesh): I congratulate Spain on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and thank it for arranging this debate, which shows its sense of responsibility and commitment with regard to the issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Palestinian issue is now the number one long-standing issue in the field of international peace and security and its resolution deserves the utmost priority. The people of Palestine cannot live with this uncertainty of life and livelihood forever.

We regret the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and that the repeated appeal of the international community to improve the deteriorating conditions of the Palestinian people remains unheeded. Furthermore, the slaughter of innocent Palestinian children, women and men; the wanton destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and vital civilian infrastructure; and the terrorizing and traumatizing of the entire civilian population in the Gaza Strip in Palestine have become very frequent. The people in the occupied territories continue to suffer due to Israeli blockades, closures, the confiscation of land and the demolition of houses. The illegal separation wall continues to divide and isolate communities, destroying livelihoods and preventing access to their jobs, families, markets, schools and hospitals.

Gaza's borders have been subject to a regime of closure that is without precedent anywhere. The closure is tantamount to the strangulation of an entire population in the form of collective punishment. The quality of life of the Palestinians had already diminished to subsistence level. The periodic escalation of violence only leads to further despair and destitution. Israel is doing so purposefully to generate fear, fury and distress among Palestinians.

We deplore the Israeli policy of collective punishment, forcing Palestinian people off their land, detaining people for a long time without charge, restricting the freedom of movement of and property ownership by Palestinian people, the deportation of Palestinian inhabitants and depriving people from their legitimate claim to natural resources, including scarce water resources. The Government of Israel has continued its settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, with a particularly aggressive settlement expansion in East Jerusalem. Those measures have been soundly rejected by the international community and their illegality unanimously confirmed.

Having monitored the situation closely, we would like to register our concern about the grave crisis, in which not a single day passes when civilians are not intimidated, arrested, detained in inhuman conditions and subjected to constant abuse and torture. As a result, the humanitarian and security situations continue in a downward spiral and tensions continue to rise, destabilizing the total peace initiative.

We urge Israel to fulfil its legal obligation, as the occupying Power, to ensure that all inhabitants are safeguarded against all acts of violence or threats; to cease the illegal detention of Palestinian people, including children; to stop the destruction of homes and land confiscation; to allow Palestinian people access to their lands, employment and natural resources; to desist from transferring its population to the territories it has occupied; and to lift its embargo against Palestinians and immediately open all border crossings to allow free movement of goods, persons and humanitarian aid.

We express our total solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterate our full and unwavering support for their legitimate and inalienable rights to a sovereign and independent State. At this juncture, we demand an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, the establishment of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, the just resolution of all final-status issues and the mobilization of international support for assistance to the Palestinian people without delay.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Atlasi (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and on your presiding over this very important meeting at a time when the situation in

Palestine is deteriorating in an unprecedented manner. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing, which covered all of the developments in the Middle East region, including the question of Palestine. We also back the Secretary-General's good offices aimed at finding a fair, lasting solution to spare the Palestinian people more bloodshed, which has, however, reached such a scale that the international system bears an unprecedented responsibility for finding a rapid, fair and lasting solution to the Palestinian question in order to extricate the Palestinian people from the current horrendous situation, including that in occupied East Jerusalem.

The situation in Palestine more generally speaking, and in Jerusalem more specifically, which is the third holy site of Islam, has experienced some very alarming developments. There have been brazen violations of international law. Moreover, the sensibilities of Muslims throughout the world have been offended as a result of the actions of the Israeli army and settlers, who have killed innocent people and demolished buildings and homes, and who are systematically attempting to Judaize the city and change the facts on the ground. Such acts are fraught with the risk of igniting a religious war, which will do nothing more than fuel obscurantism and terrorism, which will, in turn, threaten international peace and security.

My delegation thanks Spain for responding to the request by Jordan, the Arab member of the Council, to convene a meeting to consider the question of Palestine and to examine the very serious consequences of Israeli arrogance and its misguided policies, which we entirely reject because they simply disregard international law as they attempt to Judaize Jerusalem and change the status quo through the lynching and massacring of innocents. His Majesty Mohammed VI of Morocco, who is the president of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has warned against the very situation that we are witnessing today. He rang the alarm bell, and the international community should have taken up its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian people and Jerusalem more specifically.

His Majesty has repeatedly stressed through all the means available to him, including bilateral meetings and international forums, the need to put an end to the settlements and the Judaization of Al-Quds. He warned against any unilateral actions that could undermine, even harm, Muslim monuments in Jerusalem. His Majesty exchanged letters and correspondence with

the relevant international stakeholders regarding the very serious actions in Jerusalem being carried out by the Israeli authorities as part of a plan to change the legal, historical, spiritual and demographic status of Jerusalem. His Majesty has forged many contacts with leaders, including President Abbas, aimed at addressing the very alarming situation in Jerusalem. During the inauguration of the Al-Quds Committee under his current chairmanship in Marrakesh in January 2014, His Majesty stated that we needed to stress that Jerusalem lies at the very heart of the Palestinian question and the Palestinian cause, and that there can be no peace without clarifying the final status and situation of East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian State.

We need to focus on the statement that resulted from that meeting, given the fact that the issue of Jerusalem is crucial for the Umma. It lies at the very heart of any political solution, and any harm brought to the Al-Aqsa Mosque will inevitably exacerbate tensions. In following the instructions of His Majesty, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation organized a meeting of a ministerial contact group on 26 September to consider the international measures that could be introduced in East Jerusalem and Palestine. At that meeting the aggression against Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque were both condemned.

A request was addressed to the Security Council that it assume its responsibilities to ensure that the Israeli authorities put an end to their practices and provide security for the Al-Aqsa Mosque, so as to ensure that those violations are not repeated. The only solution to the question of Palestine lies through diplomacy, not war, not the killing of civilians and not or bloodshed. We need negotiations within the established frameworks to forge two States, living side by side in peace and security, two States that cooperate and that we respect. And we insist on the respect of the June 1967 borders.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mminele (South Africa): My delegation is grateful to be able to participate in this debate, and we thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/677). South Africa appreciates the statements made by the Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine and the Permanent Representative of Israel.

We also align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We meet at a critical moment of great concern. The escalation of violence and inflammatory rhetoric in the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem, especially around the holy sites of the Temple Mount — the Haram Al-Sharif compound — including the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Joseph's Tomb, are a source of great concern. South Africa denounces all attempts to change the decades-long status quo in the Holy Land, which has preserved mutual respect for the holy sites of the world's three major monotheistic religions. It is especially disconcerting that the reverence for those sites has been exploited politically and used to incite violence.

South Africa reiterates, in the strongest terms, its condemnation of violence in all its forms, regardless by whom it is perpetrated. We convey our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims on all sides who have been killed or injured. We support calls for both the Government of Israel and the State of Palestine to conduct investigations into the latest killings and to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

We call upon the authorities in Israel and Palestine to respond to the current developments with restraint and in a measured manner. South Africa agrees with the assessment by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on Friday, 16 October, when he stated that the collective punishments carried out by the Israeli Defence Forces are in contravention of international law and should be terminated without delay.

Israel and the international community must understand that the outrage among Palestinians has been created by developments on the ground, which have rendered a viable Palestinian State nearly unattainable. In addition, the depressed economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza, and the illegal settlement activities that continue unabated have compounded the rage of the Palestinians, who believe that violence is the only option left to them.

Statements and debates in the Security Council over the past years have proved ineffective to address the deteriorating situation in Palestine. We keep meeting in this Chamber to no effect, and it is depressing to realize that the Council has become unable to address major crises, mainly because the narrow interest of

a few member States has rendered it toothless. The Council's unwillingness to take meaningful action to move the peace process forward has led directly to the complete breakdown of the negotiation process and to the resulting escalation of tension and violence in Israel and Palestine.

South Africa calls on the Security Council to urgently respond to the situation in Israel. Unified and impartial action by the Council is long overdue. As a first step, we believe that the Council should urgently pave the way for the cessation of violence and create the opportunity for the parties to be able to meet. It is clear that there is no trust between the parties and that the restoration of some degree of trust is required to begin the long road back to the negotiations on a two-State solution. The Council should also adopt measures for the cessation of collective punishment and settlement activities, which are illegal, as well as for lifting the blockade against Gaza. Urgent measures are required to alleviate the suffering on the ground. We believe that only then can a timeline be set for the resumption of the peace process.

My delegation has taken note with interest of the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council on 21 October, which provides ample examples of the deployment of international protection forces, and we look forward to further discussions on those options in the Council as well as in the General Assembly.

South Africa views developments in the Middle East as intrinsically connected and believes that the only way to achieve sustainable peace in the region is for the international community to work on multiple fronts to bring about the resolution of conflicts. We remain deeply concerned by the civil war in Syria, which has wreaked havoc in that country and beyond for four years. The instability in Syria has affected the entire region and has created ample breeding ground for extremists and terrorism. However, we do not believe that continued or increasing military activity by major Powers can resolve the situation in a satisfactory manner. We believe that concerted and unified action by the Security Council is required to restore peace and stability in the entire Middle East, with due respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): The Middle East is confronted with an alarming situation. Sectarian and divisive policies, brutal oppression of legitimate demands for democracy, terrorism, and unresolved conflicts result in humanitarian crises, mass displacements and feelings of resentment.

The Israeli-Palestine conflict remains the core challenge and undermines the prospects for lasting regional and global peace. The increasing number of crises in the wider region must not distract us from the urgent need to relaunch the peace process. On the contrary, failing to address that issue will only destabilize the region further, deepen the despair and suffering and lead to more extremism.

The tragedy of Palestinians continues unabated. As tensions recently escalated in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in East Jerusalem, we were reminded once again of how dramatic the situation is in the absence of any real hope for peace. We are very concerned about the latest developments although we are slightly relieved to see that what has been going on for the last months is finally receiving the attention it merits.

Our immediate priority should be a rapid de-escalation of tension. We should not see the current situation as another in a perennial round of skirmishes and wait for the situation to calm down. However, at the same time, we should all be very clear about the root cause of the problem, which is the illegal occupation of East Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories by Israel.

The current escalation began following the entry of Israeli security forces into Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The ban preventing Palestinians from entering the Old City of Jerusalem for two days caused great outrage. It then spread to Gaza when Israeli soldiers opened fire on demonstrators and Israeli air strikes once again took civilian lives. Casualties have been mounting ever since. We strongly condemn the disproportionate use of force by Israeli security forces, which inflames the situation.

Needless to say, at the epicentre of the Palestine cause lies Jerusalem. Jerusalem matters to all humankind. A city that is sacred to Islam, Judaism and Christianity should be treated with utmost respect. The expansion of illegal settlements, violations targeting holy sites, and all other provocative activities aimed at undermining the status and sanctity of Al-Haram

Al-Sharif must immediately and unconditionally stop. We consider the Jordanian role as the custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem crucial for the preservation of the historical status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif as an Islamic sanctuary in all respects.

The situation in Gaza also remains worrying. In addition to eight years of illegal blockade, Gaza has endured three Israeli military operations in the past six years. The humanitarian conditions are so disastrous that, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Gaza could become inhabitable in less than five years if current trends persist. People who live in tremendous despair and insecurity lose their belief in the possibility of a solution and peaceful coexistence. The international community cannot afford to stand idle in the face of that tragedy and allow 2 million people to continue living in such isolation. While the immediate priority must be to address the grave situation and growing frustration in Gaza, only long-term solutions can turn the tide with respect to its reconstruction. In that vein, lifting the illegal blockade and all other restrictions in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009) is of paramount importance.

The historical injustice against the Palestinian people, reinforced by Israel's daily illegal practices on the ground, is fueling hatred, alienation and radicalism in the region and beyond. Palestinians are still deprived of their right to a decent life with dignity, respect and freedom. As the Secretary-General's report rightly underlines, the Palestinians' hopes for peace have been dashed countless times.

We all agree that the status quo is not sustainable. Israel's continuing occupation and its practices in contravention of international law hamper the efforts for permanent peace. The need to find a negotiated political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, achieving a two-State solution and ending the longest occupation in modern history in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, remains an urgent priority.

Palestine's just cause has been once again confirmed on a global scale by General Assembly resolution 69/320, which paved the way to the raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations. That was a significant symbolic step towards full recognition of Palestine.

On the Palestinian side, the need for Palestinian reconciliation is more relevant than ever. The consistent

support and encouragement of the international community is vital in that regard. Once established, the Palestinian National Unity Government, with strong and inclusive institutions, should establish control over the entire Palestinian territory.

The current situation is a sombre image of what is going to happen if the prospects for a two-State solution are lost. Thus the international community should renew its engagement for the solution of the problem and assume its responsibilities. This is long overdue. We need to intensify our efforts towards the adoption of a Security Council resolution that sets a timeframe and that establishes the parameters for peace negotiations based on the vision of a two-State peace. The Council should assume its primary responsibility vis-à-vis international peace and security.

Turkey's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people's right to a dignified life will never cease. We will support efforts to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict and to establish a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Today, I want to focus my remarks on the alarming situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, which requires our imminent attention. However, let me say a few words on the Syrian crisis across our borders, which has left a nation with severe wounds, with more than 350,000 lives lost and over 12 million persons displaced. We see with every passing day that the Syria crisis continues to be a major factor of instability for the entire region and beyond, and a collective response to address it is still lacking.

We continue to assume more than our fair share of the burden of the ongoing devastation. We are extremely concerned by the humanitarian and security impacts of the crisis, which constitutes a major national security threat to us. The current vacuum created on our southern borders as a result of the chaos in Syria has played into the hands of terrorists, who are targeting our citizens as well. In addition, we are currently faced with the risk of a new wave of refugees that has been triggered by the Syrian regime's most recent offensive on Aleppo, as well as by attacks by Daesh. It is neither possible nor just to expect Turkey or any other neighbouring country to face that challenge alone.

The international community should keep in mind that the ongoing atrocities and humanitarian disaster in Syria can be addressed only by tackling the root cause

of the problem: the violent oppression of the democratic aspirations and legitimate demands of the Syrians. That tragedy will not end until the people of Syria have a legitimate Government that truly represents their will and enjoys their full consent. On that score, the Syrian people have already spoken. They do not want to live under the authority of a regime that has waged a war against its people.

The international community and the Security Council need to address the Syrian crisis through resolute action. A comprehensive strategy with political, security and humanitarian pillars is long overdue and should be established.

First, we need to respond to the needs of millions of Syrians through the meaningful sharing of burdens and responsibilities. It is a disaster and needs to be treated as such.

Secondly, the international community must act swiftly to provide the Syrians with safety in their homeland by creating safe areas in Syria, free from aerial bombardment by the regime and ground assaults by Daesh. Parallel to those efforts, we must do all that we can to defeat terrorist organizations, such as Daesh and the Nusra Front and others designated by the Security Council, while keeping in mind that terrorism is a by-product of the crisis in Syria. The challenge of countering terrorism should not harm moderate elements that will play a vital role in the future of Syria and should not delay a political solution.

Thirdly, we should all work for a solution that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Syrian people and ensures a managed and orderly transition to a real political change based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). The political process that we should revitalize would lead to a united, democratic, nonsectarian, secular and multicultural Syria with its own territorial integrity.

Let me conclude by reiterating our strong commitment to the peace and security of the overall region and our full solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform the Council that we still have more than 10 speakers inscribed on the list. I therefore remind speakers that they have a maximum of five minutes in which to deliver their statements.

I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Palestine, Mr. Malki, as well as the other Ministers, for coming to address the Council this morning. We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing.

The entire Middle East today is in turmoil, and the conflagration in the occupied Palestinian territory is worsening. We are sitting on a powder keg. If that is not threatening international peace and security, we do not know what is. Israeli restrictions on Palestinian freedoms and rights, harassment by Israeli settlers, tensions around the holy sites and the bleak prospects for peace have pushed Palestinians onto the streets. There is talk of the beginning of the third intifada.

This morning, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson was categorical in his briefing. The reason for the current crisis is that the Palestinians do not see any hope. We agree with Foreign Minister Malki that the status quo is unacceptable. We appreciate the Secretary-General's visit to the region. He said in Ramallah yesterday,

"The only way to end the violence is through real and visible progress towards a political solution, including an end to the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State".

We believe that time is quickly running out, and the Council cannot remain a spectator as hope continues to fade. By holding two emergency meetings over the past week, the Council has shown that it is fully seized of the matter, but much more is required. We support the Palestinian demand for international protection. The paper on the subject that the Secretary-General shared with the Council yesterday provides options that the Council needs to discuss seriously. We, the international community, cannot allow the wanton disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law.

The Council can help with both protection and final status issues. Setting timelines and parameters to make the two-State solution a reality is both urgent and critical. That will provide the hope that the Palestinian youth yearn for. Only hope can bring the region back from the precipice. The Palestinian flag has found its place at the United Nations. We hope that Palestine will soon be accepted as a full Member as well.

Lasting peace can be achieved only through political solutions, not through heavy-handed tactics and the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians. The fear among the Palestinians of a changed status of the holy

sites in Jerusalem is real and needs to be addressed, and not just by words but by actions. The Council has a responsibility to ensure peace and security in what is the most volatile region of the world. We must never forget the Palestinian civilians, whose struggle for self-determination is epic yet remains unfulfilled.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Spanish presidency for having organized this timely open debate, coinciding with the shocking developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his very candid briefing.

I wish to join the voice of Algeria to those of the overwhelming majority of speakers who have so clearly expressed themselves on what is happening at this very moment in the Middle East and, in particular, in the occupied land of Palestine. While it is unnecessary to add to or go into the details that Minister Riad Malki mentioned earlier, we share and live his feelings. Let me add that in my country the outrage over the images carried by all media is immense. Injustice, abuses and arrogance continue to guide the behaviour of those who think that there are no limits — not even concerning the most sacred and dearest places, such as the Haram Al-Sharif.

The recent and tragic developments and the suffering of the Palestinian people demonstrate that prospects for a peaceful settlement are becoming increasingly unattainable. That is why my country reiterates the following in the strongest possible terms.

First, the very core of the issue of Palestine and the Middle East is the illegal occupation of Arab territories. Whatever happens or by whatever angle one sees the entire question of the situation in Palestine, there is one fundamental issue that should never be forgotten nor set aside: the illegal occupation of Arab land. As long as we — the Security Council, the international community and all stakeholders — ignore or belittle that, there will be increased suffering, injustice and violations of all kinds that will occur before our eyes. It is appalling that settlers and other civilians have been given no more and no less than a kind of licence to kill.

Secondly, as long as a solution to the illegal occupation is not envisioned and the Palestinian people's legitimate national rights, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the Palestinian State capital, are not

recognized, the international community must protect Palestinian civilians, in accordance with all the relevant international conventions. In that regard, I welcome the document issued today by the Secretary-General that provides historical examples, many of the utmost importance and relevance, and could serve as a model for the protection of civilians.

Thirdly, the international community, individual States, the Quartet and the Security Council have a specific responsibility. Debates like today's are necessary, but they must be fruitful and lead to operational measures to de-escalate the crisis and set the conditions to break the current impasse. There is no wall high enough to block the legitimate grievances of young and old alike. Israeli practices are not simply illegal, they are wrong. Just a month ago, the Palestinian flag was raised on the United Nations premises. It is our shared responsibility to make that flag again fly high over its own land, with the establishment of the Palestinian State and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Tunisia.

Mr. Khiari (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): As the international community commemorates the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we remember the horrors that led to its creation and the hope of saving the world from another world war. For the past 50 years, the forces of the occupying Power, in full view of the eyes of the international community, have attacked generations of Palestinians, including women and children. Israel has consistently violated every relevant international instrument and United Nations resolution.

Days, weeks and years pass and nothing happens, except that the situation deteriorates further. Israel does not end its usual practices against the Palestinians and the holy sites in East Jerusalem, or in the West Bank, and Gaza. Israel persists in its colonialist expansion and its attempts to change the status quo with respect to the holy sites and continues to put obstacles in the way of any peace initiative. In 2013 and 2014, the United States attempted to mediate between the parties, but to no avail.

There is no denying that the international community and the Security Council have a responsibility in this matter. Meanwhile, Israel persists in its illegal, immoral practices against Palestinians. It has given free rein to its settlers and to terrorist groups to carry

out acts of aggression in Jerusalem, to attack citizens and holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Those actions seriously aggravate the situation and are a clear indication of Israel's plans to change the traditional status quo in that area and escalate the situation.

Israel must shoulder its responsibilities. We condemn all attacks in East Jerusalem and on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We consider them to be in flagrant violation of the holy sites of the Muslims and their religion. We have warned the Council that there is bound to be a reaction against the aggression and violence; and, indeed, religious hatred and extremism have been growing. We also condemn the serious military escalation and the unjustified use of force by the occupying Power to prevent the Palestinian people from defending their holy sites, even including extrajudicial executions.

The international community and the Security Council must now change their approach to the question of Palestine. A two-State solution that is just and lasting and that will enable the people of Palestine to recover their legitimate rights must be found. If the current situation is allowed to continue, it will simply get worse. The growing sense of frustration and injustice will have devastating consequences for all the parties. In order to put an end to the tension and uprisings in the region, it is necessary to end the occupation and settlement policy, which is, after all, the root cause of the conflict.

I commend the efforts of the various parties to try to find a just solution to the question of Palestine. We appreciate the endeavours of the Security Council, of the Quartet in its new format, of the Secretary-General and of United States Secretary of State John Kerry to defuse the current situation.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that it is high time to consider what can actually be done to protect the Palestinian people and the holy sites of Islam. Tunisia supports the request of President Mahmoud Abbas to the United Nations to provide international protection to the Palestinian people in keeping with international norms and laws.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at a time when the situation in the Middle East, especially in Israel and Palestine, is on a dangerous course. The recent

cycle of violence arose across the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, particularly Jerusalem, reminds both the Israelis and Palestinians of the fact that mutual provocations and unilateral actions will not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue. That simple and powerful truth has been echoing within this Chamber for decades.

The Republic of Korea once again urges all parties to put an end to violence and return to the negotiating table to work out a viable framework to resolve the conflict, with the two-State solution at its core. Preserving the historic status quo for the holy sites in Jerusalem and stopping the expansion of settlements in the occupied territory should be the first step towards that goal. The leaders of both Israel and Palestine must not forget that today's violence and hatred not only destroy their present lives but also deprive their children of any hope for a peaceful future. The past several decades of violence and intolerance are proof of that grim reality, and today's dangerous threats of violent extremism further increase the likelihood of that bleak future. We call upon both sides to have more courage and take more responsibility.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the timely and urgent efforts by the Secretary-General, especially his recent visit to the region, in order to prevent escalation and restore a long-term political horizon of peace. We also look forward to recharged mediation efforts by the Quartet. Every possible avenue should be explored to create a more favourable environment for dialogue between Israel and Palestine for a sustainable peace.

On Syria, the Republic of Korea remains deeply concerned about the heavy toll on civilians as the conflict enters its fifth year. The key stakeholders should immediately sit down together to discuss the common denominator with which to start. In this regard, the Republic of Korea fully supports the ongoing efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura in seeking a political solution, which is the only viable option.

We also strongly urge all relevant parties to prevent and minimize civilian casualties and humanitarian crises. It has been reported that an additional nearly 50,000 Syrian people have been displaced following military offensives around Aleppo. The international community must pay closer attention to the unprecedented humanitarian crisis involving refugees and displaced persons and urgently take all necessary measures to address the related human tragedies. We oppose any actions by any party that hinder the

delivery of humanitarian assistance and urge all parties to fully cooperate with the international community's humanitarian efforts.

We also believe that seeking legitimate accountability is part of a sustainable solution. The use of barrel bombs is an explicit violation of resolution 2139 (2014). We welcome the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, and urge that all parties responsible for the use of chlorine as a weapon be held accountable.

Turning to Yemen, the Republic of Korea welcomes the Yemeni Government's statement on 18 October in which it expressed its willingness to participate in peace talks with the Houthi rebels. We further call on all the parties to make maximum use of this opportunity to forge a sustainable peace and defend the territory of Yemen from the terrorist threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

We are witnessing the increasing vulnerability of the Middle East as the region faces the multifaceted challenges of violent extremism, terrorism and the vicious cycle of violence and intolerance. This has serious negative impacts on the stability of other regions as well as the entire world. This is also warrants an enhanced role for the Security Council to maintain peace and security in the region. The Republic of Korea will continue to support the Security Council in fulfilling its mandate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Fesko (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. Ukraine associates itself with the statement made by the Observer of the European Union earlier today.

Our country is committed to maintaining a balanced and impartial position on the Middle East peace process. We are willing to develop stable and constructive relations with both Israel and Arab States.

On the issue of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ukraine supports the principle of the coexistence of Israel and the Arab States living side by side in peace and security. We support the Middle East peace process and believe that peace in the region can be achieved only if viable mutual concessions are made at the negotiating table. Unfortunately, we are currently

observing the deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, where tensions continue to rise.

Ukraine is deeply concerned about a long-lasting worsening of the situation around the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We call on all parties to show restraint and moderation on this issue. We believe that it is important to avoid any provocations that could lead to further confrontations in a very tense regional context. It is important for both parties to find the courage to respect the holy places in accordance with the principles specified in fundamental international documents, particularly those of UNESCO, and the agreements that regulate the status of the Temple Mount complex.

We believe that direct negotiations between the parties is the only way to achieve a peaceful solution, and any unilateral steps will not solve the key problems standing in the way of a peace settlement. The strategic outcome of the direct negotiations is to create two States that will coexist in peace and security, based on the expectations of the international community for a stable, democratic and prosperous Middle East. Ukraine reiterates its position that the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement should lie within the framework of the unconditional fulfilment by the parties to the conflict of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

With respect to the situation in Syria, Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to the universal principles and basic norms of international law and advocates strict respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria. Ukraine strongly condemns the ongoing violence and systematic violations of human rights in the country. We consider that the Syrian Government bears full responsibility for the present condition of the country and for the sufferings of its people caused by the bloody conflict. Fighting between Government forces, non-State armed groups and listed terrorist groups continues to result in death, injury and displacement of civilians and the destruction of property and infrastructure. Parties to the conflict continue to disregard their obligations under international humanitarian law, specifically regarding the protection of civilians.

Ukraine calls for an immediate end to the bloodshed and for the greater use of political and diplomatic means to resolve the conflict. In expressing solidarity

with the international community on the urgent need to eliminate the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as a global threat, Ukraine believes that sustainable peace and stability in the region can be achieved only through a political process aimed at establishing a Syrian Government of national unity and restoring the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukraine is concerned over Russia's latest aggressive movements in the Middle East, in particular in Syria. While using the slogan of confronting international terrorism as a cover, the Kremlin is yet again carrying out its policy of breeding and exploiting instability along with the backing of anti-democratic regimes. In the light of Russia's continuing military aggression against Ukraine, which is accompanied by direct support and funding of terrorism in Ukraine's Donbas region, Moscow's declared goal of fighting terrorism in Syria appears especially disingenuous. The attacks by the Russian Air Force in Syria, which have led to civilian deaths but have not caused substantial damage to ISIL, raise serious doubts over Russia's ability to play a constructive role in the Syrian crisis settlement process.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannigan (Iceland): I would like to thank the Spanish presidency for convening today's meeting.

Iceland joins others in expressing grave concern at the present spike in violence in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. Acts of terror are unacceptable in all circumstances.

As has been stated, these acts of violence do not occur in a vacuum. Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun highlighted a number of key elements of the context in his briefing to the Security Council last week (S/PV.7536). Among them, he identified demolitions of Palestinian dwellings, ongoing settlements, heavy-handed Israeli military action against civilians and the blockade of Gaza. Collective punishment of the Palestinian population is not only a breach of international law, but it is also demonstrably counterproductive. These ongoing developments on the ground have a key significance for the wider context of this conflict. They add up to the dangerous undermining of the only viable course to peace — a two-State solution.

Yes, there is incitement — on both sides, through the social media, according to Assistant Secretary-

General Zerihoun. But incitement also has a context. Incitement is a part of the violence and is facilitated and given credibility by the wider context of loss of political perspective and a growing despair among the Palestinian population and fear among Israeli civilians. Political leaders on both sides bear a heavy responsibility to encourage restraint.

It is vital that the Council respond urgently and effectively to this crisis. There must be de-escalation and a cessation of all violence from both sides. But the deep distrust that exists between the two parties puts a large question mark over whether de-escalation is possible without external assistance. One Security Council member has commented on the tendency for each side to highlight the provocations and acts of violence by the other side, while seeking to minimize its own actions. There is little chance in the present situation that Palestinians could see the Israeli forces as acting even-handedly.

The Council should look at ways to assist in starting on the long road back to some kind of mutual confidence between the parties. In that regard, we should not forget the huge potential that exists in involving women on all sides. The importance of getting women involved in peace processes was proclaimed by the Council earlier this month, when it marked the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) (see S/PV.7533). In the short term, Palestinians need a sense of security for their own people. The Security Council should look at ways of bringing that about. Palestinians also need confidence that there is a political route to the two-State solution within a finite time period. Israelis must have confidence that their security is not compromised. The urgency is redoubled by the religious dimension, which has become more present since the violence at the holy places in Jerusalem. It is vital that the status quo be maintained, not only in word but also in deed. The Security Council must ensure that the parties are in no doubt as to the importance of that.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): At the outset, my delegation wishes to extend its warmest congratulations to the President and his country on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also appreciate the insightful briefings that we received this morning from various persons, including the statements by the representatives of Israel and the State of Palestine, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General.

My delegation welcomes the continued focus by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, on this very important topic. Let me express my delegation's profound appreciation for the opportunity accorded to Member States to debate the pressing matter of the situation in the Middle East, which is taking place against the backdrop of rampant violence in that region.

Botswana attaches great importance to the fundamental principle of self-determination for peoples under foreign occupation. It is for that reason that we remain deeply concerned that, despite the sustained efforts of the Security Council, the Palestinian people continue to be denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence by the occupying Power, Israel. Botswana continues to believe that there is no alternative to the two-State solution, which implies the coexistence of Israel and Palestine, living side by side, as two sovereign States. That cannot be overemphasized.

Botswana joins the international community in deploring the continuing human rights violations in the Middle East, especially in the interactions between Israelis and Palestinians, in which thousands continue to lose their lives, while many remain displaced with no homes, no access to the basic necessities of life and no hope for the future. We call for an end to the horrific situation that innocent civilians continue to endure, which has resulted in millions seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. The living conditions to which the Palestinian people continue to be subjected are appalling and dehumanizing.

In his briefing to the Security Council on 15 September 2015, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, said that

"the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has left an indelible scar on the people and landscape of the region. Frustration, fear and violence have continued to spiral, undermining belief in finding a way out of the impasse" (S/PV.7521, p. 2).

In the light of that statement by Mr. Mladenov, my delegation wishes to encourage the parties to the conflict to return to the negotiating table and resume the long overdue talks and to approach the talks with a spirit of compromise and mutual respect, with a view to reaching a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution. Nonetheless, we note and welcome the

continued efforts of the Secretary-General, the Middle East Quartet, the Security Council and all those who continue to be committed to the peace process for their relentless efforts to see a peaceful end to the conflict. It is my delegation's belief that those efforts require the full support of the international community.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Botswana's strong support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We remain hopeful that someday their plight will become history. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians should give proof of their will and desire to shape their future and end this long, drawn-out conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): I join other speakers in commending the President for convening this important debate.

The Sri Lanka delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Finding a just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East has been a priority for the international community since 1948. As long as the question of Palestine continues to be unresolved, the Middle East will never achieve the peace desired. A just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people can be achieved only through negotiations and a political process that delivers real results and hope. The international community has repeatedly encouraged concrete, credible steps, including a freeze on illegal settlement building, so as to jump-start meaningful negotiations. The parties must refrain from unilateral measures, which undermine the peace in the region. The ongoing settlement activities, which are illegal under international humanitarian law, need to end at the earliest, which would enable a sustainable peace. All sides should refrain from confrontational actions, which lead to a spiral of violence. The parties should build upon existing agreements, including the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The blockade of the Gaza Strip is another obstacle to the peace process. Those restrictions need to be lifted within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009). That would contribute significantly to the economic advancement of Gaza and the well-being of the people. We note with concern that the United Nations is hard-

pressed to keep the vast majority of the people of Gaza supplied with the minimum necessities. More than one year after the widespread destruction in Gaza last year, thousands of families continue to live in their damaged homes, with winter approaching. As of August 2015, only one third of the \$4 billion pledged by the international community in Cairo in October 2014 has been disbursed. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have noted that up to 100,000 Palestinians remain displaced and live in precarious conditions, struggling to gain access to basic services such as electricity, water, sanitation and medical services.

We also strongly support the work of the United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which play key roles in serving Palestinians in the areas of their operations. Those areas include Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Recently, UNRWA experienced a financial crisis that nearly affected the operations of hundreds of schools run by the Agency. It is critical to avoid such situations in the future, as they aggravate the already difficult conditions faced by Palestinian children, which may, in turn, also encourage them to engage in acts of violence through desperation.

The situation of Palestinian detainees, including women and children, remains a serious concern. Palestinians are being held under administrative detention without charge or trial for an indefinite period of time. Administrative detention is permitted under international law only exceptionally and for short periods of time, but, regrettably, in the occupied Palestinian territories it remains the norm. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians will only enhance feelings of desperation and insecurity and widen the gap between the parties. The security needs of the people of Israel must also be respected. A climate conducive to peace will be encouraged if each side takes an approach sensitive to the other's concerns. We hope that all parties will engage constructively and sincerely to end the conflict and enable lasting peace.

Terrorism originating from the Middle East region has the potential to pose a serious threat to the security and stability of many countries. In today's interconnected world, it is very easy for agents of extremism to spread their ideologies across national borders. In that regard, the lingering question of Palestine is one of the main

factors driving the recruitment of terrorists in the region, as well as worldwide. We also call for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, which is essential for the preservation of overall peace in the Middle East.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its support for Palestine's application for admission to full membership of the United Nations.

We also support the implementation of United Nations resolutions, including resolution 242 (1967), regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood, and the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Kingdom of Spain and its Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mr. García Margallo, for presiding over the Security Council this month and for convening today's open debate at the ministerial level on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing at the beginning of this meeting.

The Council is meeting today to debate an item on its agenda that is discussed in open debate on a quarterly basis, namely, the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. This meeting is being held at a time when the region is witnessing worrisome turns and developments, all under the shadow of the violation by the occupying Power, Israel, of the sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the killing of many innocent people. There is no doubt that the exacerbation of the crisis will continue until Israel abides by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which is applicable to all the occupied Arab territories, including occupied Palestinian land.

Such confrontations have led to the killing of many Palestinians and to the injuring of many others by the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Kingdom of Bahrain, in the face of such deplorable acts, expresses its strong condemnation of the continued aggression and the ongoing breach of international law, as well as of the flagrant violations of humanitarian and moral norms. Such illegal, inhumane acts are likely to snuff out any possibility for peace, as well as to further fuel tensions, violence, extremism and

hatred, which will not build human relations or build bridges of respect, as called for by all religions. Indeed, such acts will not lead to building peaceful societies that uphold dignity, culture and peaceful coexistence. There is no doubt that for Israel to terrorize the Palestinian people by using violence and brutal force will do grave harm to the peace process and will place additional obstacles in the path of any peaceful settlement.

International intervention is urgently required to put an end to Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, to provide appropriate protection and to avoid any setbacks that could lead to further deterioration and bring harm to the entire region. The international community should create the environment necessary for the resumption of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, in order for them to take up fundamental issues in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed terms of reference.

The position of the Kingdom of Bahrain is firm when it comes to Palestine. It is a position based on fundamental pillars, namely, the need to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions; to respect the international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative; to apply the two-State solution; to establish an independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital; and to lift the unjust and illegal siege of the Gaza Strip. In that regard, the international community must shoulder its responsibility to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Without question, a peaceful settlement to the problems of the Middle East must include an end to Israel's occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands held since 1967, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan; the total withdrawal by Israel from remaining occupied Lebanese lands, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions; the establishment of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State; and a just solution ensuring the return of Palestinian refugees to their towns and villages, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). We stress the need to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and for unconditional respect for the principles of international legitimacy.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We support the statement delivered by the representative

of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The situation in the region of the Middle East continues to be of grave concern to the international community. Just a year after Israel's most recent attack on the Gaza Strip, in which more than 2,000 Palestinians lost their lives, among them at least 299 women and 556 children, and which plunged that territory into terror, death and mass destruction, the Palestinian people continue to be the victims of acts of aggression perpetrated by Israel, which continues to occupy their land, murder their children, destroy their homeland and shred their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination.

Despite the periodic open debates in the Security Council, which have demonstrated overwhelming support for the Palestinian cause, the Council has unfortunately failed to adopt a single resolution demanding that Israel put an immediate end to its military occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories; that it lift the blockade against the Gaza Strip; that it halt the construction and expansion of its illegal settlements and of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territory; and that Israel be held accountable for the war crimes it has committed and its collective punishment of the Palestinian people. We cannot allow the Palestinian cause to continue without a just resolution.

This organ must fulfil its obligation to promote a negotiated settlement that guarantees the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory; the peaceful coexistence of two independent States; the establishment of the independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with its capital in East Jerusalem and with the pre-1967 borders; along with a just solution to the problem of Palestine refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

We are convinced that the solution to this long-standing conflict could contribute to significantly reducing current tensions in the Middle East.

My delegation once again reiterates in this Chamber its strong condemnation of the Israeli settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and of all the measures, policies and practices connected to that campaign, which, in addition to the construction and expansion of illegal settlements and the wall, includes the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian land and property, the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of

Palestinian families and the transfer of settlers into occupied Palestinian territory, among other violations of international law, international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions. My delegation also condemns the violence, provocations and incitement to hatred and terror by Israeli settlers, and the arbitrary detentions and mass incarcerations, and demands that they end once and for all. Cuba reaffirms its full support for the admission of Palestine as a full Member of this Organization.

Many of the pledges made for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip following the terrible bombings and massive destruction inflicted by Israel in July and August 2014 have not materialized. We call on all members of the international community to fulfil their commitments and work to rebuild that devastated area.

Achieving peace in Syria will be possible only through respect for its people's right to decide their own destiny. A political solution through dialogue and negotiation is the only alternative to the conflict in Syria. Anyone fuelling the conflict from outside with a declared goal of regime change bears responsibility for the thousands of civilian casualties that have mounted up during four years of fighting. We would like to once again emphasize our alarm at the loss of innocent lives as a result of the conflict in Syria and once again condemn every act of violence committed against civilians there. But claiming to protect human lives and combat extremist elements cannot be a pretext for foreign intervention. That is why we call for the withdrawal of any foreign presence in Syria without the consent of the Syrian Government and appropriate coordination with its authorities. The United Nations, particularly the Council, should urge for an immediate ceasefire as a preliminary to dialogue and negotiations, and should not promote initiatives that encourage further tensions and that have yet to produce concrete results.

The world's leaders recently adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the next 15 years (General Assembly resolution 70/1). Now begins the most difficult stage, which will require significant financial and human resources to implement. We have no right to sacrifice present and future generations to the horrors of war and the devastation it causes, no matter where it occurs. The Security Council has a crucial role to play in helping all the peoples of the Middle East to achieve their aspirations to the well-being, peace and development that they deserve. Its

members should be advocates for peaceful solutions, without foreign interference, that will safeguard States' sovereignty and territorial integrity and make a decisive contribution to preserving the lives of the people affected by the conflicts in the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Ntonga (Zimbabwe): I would like to thank the Spanish presidency for convening this important open debate and for giving this issue the significance it deserves. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his insightful briefing, and the Ministers who participated in the debate for their constructive proposals.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are seriously concerned about the acts of violence in and around the holy sites and by any attempt to change the status quo in East Jerusalem. Access to the Temple Mount and other holy sites must be preserved under the status quo arrangements. The recent tragic events are a stark reminder of the plight of the Palestinian people, owing to a systematic denial of their right to self-determination. We welcome the insistence of the President and other Council members that urgent steps must be taken to stop the violence. Furthermore, as some other delegations have pointed out, this is not a conflict between equal forces. The Council must therefore take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians.

The current violent actions are a direct result of hopelessness and despair at the grim prospects for a two-State solution, which nonetheless offers the best prospects for peace. Israel's security cannot be guaranteed by using excessive force to inflict collective punishment on defenceless Palestinian civilians. The spiral of violence feeds into extremism and terrorism. The situation requires that the Security Council act decisively to put a halt to all such violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

The Security Council shares the blame for the longest continuous occupation in modern history. No measures have been taken to stop the aggression against the Palestinian people, and that has emboldened the occupying Power to act with impunity in blatant

violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Council must protect the people in the occupied territories. In that regard, we look forward to the Secretary-General's report on ways to respond to President Abbas's request for international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions.

The deteriorating situation in the occupied territories makes it even more urgent to relaunch the political process, end the impasse and restore hopes for a two-State solution. We welcome the recent initiatives taken by the expanded Quartet to revive the peace process, and those by some members of the Security Council. The Council should shoulder its responsibilities and create conditions conducive to negotiations by engaging both parties to the conflict, and other international partners, in discussions on a time frame for commencing negotiations. We would like to underscore the importance of salvaging a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and the need for a just and comprehensive peace for Palestine. Zimbabwe reaffirms its solidarity with the Palestinian people and supports realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights, including to self-determination and freedom in an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and harmony with the State of Israel.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I intend to accede to her request. However, I would remind all delegations that are not Council members that they are limited to one additional statement only.

Ms. Meitzad (Israel): Israel cannot remain silent in the face of the reckless and inflammatory allegations about my country made earlier by several delegations. Sitting here today in the Council, I was amazed to hear that several Arab countries still insist that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the centre of the problems in the Middle East. They say this while thousands of their brothers are being massacred by the Syrian regime, slaughtered and executed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or terrorized by Hizbullah, Jabhat Al-Nusra or Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis.

Turning to Lebanon, I find it amazing that the representative of a country that for two years now has failed even to elect a president has the nerve to criticize

the Prime Minister of a democratic country. Let us not forget that in Lebanon a terrorist group that assists the Al-Assad regime in slaughtering civilians is part of the Government — half of the Cabinet, in fact.

Regarding Saudi Arabia, it is the height of audacity for the representative of a country that routinely carries out public beheadings, including of teenagers, to criticize the measures that Israel takes to defend itself. A young Saudi protester, Ali Mohammed Al-Nimr, age 17, is set to be beheaded for encouraging protest during the Arab Spring. This is a country that engages in indiscriminate bombing and is attacking anything that moves. It recently killed at least 70 civilians when it bombed a wedding party in Yemen. Perhaps countries that engage in the indiscriminate bombing of innocents should not raise the issue of war crimes.

Earlier, we heard the representative of one of the world's worst human rights abusers, Venezuela, accuse Israel of abusing human rights. That Jeffersonian democracy deprives its citizens of democratic rights by repressing and imprisoning opposition members. Here in the Council, Venezuelan leaders enjoy full freedom of speech; the same is not true for their constituents back home. Venezuela's accusations and conspiracy theories cannot be answered in a brief right of reply. It is disheartening that one of the 15 representatives on the Council should utter such baseless accusations.

As for the Palestinians, it is unfortunate that they are repeating their false accusations and breached the protocol of the Security Council by disrupting the Israeli representative's speech. Interestingly enough, no one seemed surprised. The Palestinian observer did not answer one particular question: Why does Palestine refuse to negotiate? Its baseless accusations and malicious lies have been answered time and time again, including in our speech this morning, and I do not want to waste the Council's time by discussing them. An offer was made yet again in the Council for President Abbas to discuss peace here at the United Nations or in Ramallah, Jerusalem or anywhere else.

For those who have spent the entire meeting listening to hateful incitement, let me repeat the words of Israel's Permanent Representative: "Like people everywhere, the people of Israel seek to live in peace and to see their children prosper". Despite the difficult time my country is facing, we remain confident in the promise of Israel's future. We call on the Palestinians to join us on the path to peace and reconciliation. Together, we can create a better future for both our peoples. As we said this morning, we aspire to peace and we are committed to the status quo.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more speakers on my list.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.



Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7541st meeting

Friday, 23 October 2015, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain)

Members:

Angola	Mr. Lucas
Chad	Mr. Gombo
Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
China	Mr. Zhao Yong
France	Mr. Lamek
Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaite
Malaysia	Mr. Merican
New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Mr. Pressman
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramirez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Letters dated 9 October 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/801) (S/2015/802)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

15-33147 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Letters dated 9 October 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/801) (S/2015/802)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Eritrea and Somalia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/810, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Lithuania, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2015/801 and S/2015/802, which contain letters dated 9 October 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

Abstaining:

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 14 votes in favour and one abstaining. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2244 (2015).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make a statement after the vote.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Venezuela abstained in the voting on resolution 2244 (2015) because we feel that the negotiating process that led to its adoption was not broad enough to take into account the various points of view held by delegations. Our request to extend the consultations in order to produce a consensus text was disregarded, and the text was drafted in a silent procedure despite our reservations. Venezuela tried to create a space conducive to understanding so that the varied points of view might be reflected in a balanced text that reflected the political and security dynamic prevailing in the Horn of Africa.

After silence was broken on the draft resolution so as to pursue dialogue and achieve a consensus text, we were surprised when negotiations were reopened among a small group of countries, without the participation of Venezuela and the majority of the non-permanent members of the Security Council. This recurring practice affects the working methods of this organ, in particular the transparency and inclusiveness that should prevail at all stages of negotiation in order to guarantee the participation of all its members and, ultimately, the unity of the Security Council.

My country demands respect in the Security Council — respect from the penholders for the opinions and points of views of every country, whether permanent or elected Council members. Speaking not only in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) but also in my national capacity, we have reasonable concerns that there is bad interpretation and a self-attributed expansion to the Committee when it comes to what is set out in the resolutions that established the Somalia/Eritrea Sanctions Committee.

Venezuela assumed the chairmanship of this Committee with a belief in the need to move forward constructively with all Member States to improve the relations between the Committee and affected countries, with a view to arriving at the ultimate goal of finding a political solution to the conflict. That should be the purpose of the sanctions instrument, which cannot be used for hidden purposes to punish countries and impact peoples. Sanctions committees make sense only insofar as they contribute to a political solution to conflicts. Their purpose is not to maintain or manage conflicts indefinitely, but to help to end them.

It is clear — and the fourteenth preambular paragraph and paragraph 26 of the resolution, among others, reflect this — that some permanent members perceive this sanctions regime as an end in itself, and under that premise seek to continue to indefinitely expand the mandate and scope of the resolution to new areas, distorting any political goal that the sanctions may have had at the time of their initial establishment.

Venezuela is committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes throughout the world, in line with Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. Our position is based on the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, their Governments and their peoples, as well as confidence in their ability to resolve their own problems without tutelage or interference, but by choosing political and peaceful means for resolving conflicts.

In conclusion, I should like to appeal to members of the Committee. Our chairmanship has coincided with the important task of reviewing the Committee's working methods. I believe that the goals and functioning of sanctions committees should be subject to a thorough review on the part of the Council.

Mr. Iliehev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted in favour of the United Kingdom's resolution 2244 (2015), on Somalia and Eritrea, as for us and other members of the Security Council the imperative is to swiftly achieve peace and stability in the countries of the Horn of Africa. However, we continue to have concerns about the intrusive nature of a number of provisions of the resolution that effectively undermine the principle of State sovereignty.

I should also point out that, as was the case last year, certain provisions of this resolution are based on conclusions in the final report of the Monitoring Group Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) that have not been substantiated by facts. Let me reiterate that experts should not go beyond the purview of their mandate during the preparation of their documents. They must be guided solely by verified facts, and not build their conclusions on the basis of conjectures and unfounded accusations.

We are forced to reiterate that the use of sanctions is an exceptional and rarely effective method. Resolving conflicts must take place exclusively through political and diplomatic means, on the basis of mutual respect

and multifaceted dialogue among all the States in the region.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): We welcome the adoption of resolution 2244 (2015). We particularly welcome the fact that it includes a specific provision to reinforce Somalia's ability to exercise sovereignty over its natural resources. Disputes between illegal fishing vessels, local fishermen and armed groups concerning the illegal exploitation of Somalia's natural resources run the risk of becoming a driver of conflict.

Somalia's concern about its ability to control access to its resources is not unique. The governance and exploitation of natural resources and the challenge posed by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing was also identified by many Member States during the open debate (see S/PV.7499) held in July on peace and security issues facing small island developing States.

On Eritrea, New Zealand recognizes that there are important issues to address with regard to the scope and focus of the sanctions regime in the light of the last two reports (S/2015/802 and S/2014/727) of the Monitoring Group. We hope that an improved relationship, including on access between the Government of Eritrea and the Monitoring Group, may enable the Council to take clear decisions in future to determine if the original purpose for which the sanctions were imposed continues to apply.

Mr. Zhao Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted in favour of resolution 2244 (2015), which the Security Council just adopted. Since the beginning of this year, the Federal Government of Somalia, with the vigorous support of the international community, has been dedicated to the implementation of Vision 2016, actively safeguarded State security, promoted economic development and improved the people's living standards, which China greatly appreciates. We hope that resolution 2244 (2015) can be fully and accurately implemented, and that it will play a genuinely constructive role in promoting the peaceful reconstruction of Somalia and safeguarding regional peace and stability.

The final report (S/2015/802) of the Monitoring Group under the Somalia and Eritrea Sanctions Committee indicated that no evidence had been found showing Eritrean Government support for Al-Shabaab. In view of changes in the situation, the Security Council should make corresponding adjustments to the relevant

sanctions measures so as to create conditions for the eventual lifting of the sanctions.

China has always supported Africa in resolving African issues in an African way and has encouraged the relevant countries of the region to appropriately resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation and to jointly work for regional peace, stability and development.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes today's adoption of resolution 2244 (2015) and the 14 positive votes it received.

The Monitoring Group has a key role to play in keeping the Security Council informed about sanctions issues in a region that is so important to our collective work. At the heart of the Group's ability to do its work is the willingness of Governments to cooperate. Unfortunately, today's resolution reflects two very different approaches to that cooperation. On the one hand, cooperation between the Monitoring Group and the Government of Eritrea is on the wrong trajectory. The Group has not been able to visit Eritrea since February 2011, in spite of successive Security Council resolutions that make clear the importance of the Group being able to discharge its mandate fully by visiting Eritrea. Today's resolution could not be clearer on what Eritrea needs to do: deepen engagement with the Group and facilitate the Group's regular entry into Eritrea. Eritrea is the master of its own destiny and it is at a crossroads, that is, either admit the Group to Eritrea and show the Council that it has nothing to hide and then engage in a serious discussion on the appropriateness of sanctions, or choose continued isolation. The United Kingdom very much hopes that it will choose the first course of action.

On the other hand, in Somalia the Monitoring Group has built a strong relationship with the Government. We applaud the Group and the Government for their constructive engagement throughout the course of the Group's mandate. We are pleased to see the Group spending more time in Somalia. The United Kingdom commends the progress that the Government of Somalia has made in managing its weapons. There are still some worrying reports of weapons being diverted for Government stocks, but the trajectory is the right one.

On public financial management, again there is progress. But much more needs to be done. Proper management of public finances in the run-up to next year's elections is key to ensuring trust between the

Government and its people. The United Kingdom will continue to be at the forefront of efforts to support the Somali Government to strengthen its management of public resources.

The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the Monitoring Group. We look forward to its reporting over the coming year. We hope that the Government of Eritrea will choose cooperation over isolation.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): The United States strongly supports today's resolution 2244 (2015), which targets many of the most serious causes of instability and insecurity in Somalia and mandates the United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea to continue its important work. The resolution reflects the Security Council's understanding that the international response to the situation in the Horn of Africa must be comprehensive in order to be effective.

As was highlighted during the Secretary-General's high-level meeting on Somalia during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, Somalia's trajectory has turned from State failure towards State-building. That is why the United States strongly supported language in this resolution that underscores the importance of stronger and more transparent legal frameworks and of ensuring regional administrations' participation as Somalia continues to make strides in its State-building process this year.

The United States continues to support the Security Council's commitment to eliminating all sources of funding for Al-Shabaab, including by reauthorizing the maritime interdiction of Somali charcoal exports in order to enforce the Council's ban on such exports. Somalia is clearly a country blessed with rich natural resources, but without stronger legal frameworks and resource-sharing agreements, those potential sources of wealth for all Somalis risk becoming drivers of conflict. We therefore welcome the resolution's attention to those ongoing challenges to governance, and the importance that the Federal Government of Somalia has placed on addressing such issues expeditiously.

The Federal Government of Somalia has sought greater international recognition and support for Somalia's challenges related to the extensive illegal fishing occurring in waters where it has jurisdiction. In recognition of that, today the Security Council acknowledges its concerns about the matter and encourages the Federal Government of Somalia,

with the support of the international community, to undertake efforts to better address this practice.

By supporting full implementation of the measures reflected in today's resolution, Member States will help to promote the long-term peace and stability of the wider region. Additionally, and importantly, we call on all countries to cooperate with the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea so that this vital body can carry out its mandate effectively. We also call on Eritrea to respond to the Monitoring Group's requests for information and permit the Group to travel to Eritrea. Eritrea's refusal to engage constructively with the Monitoring Group must change before we can take seriously Eritrean calls for these sanctions to be lifted.

Somalis are laying the foundation for a more stable, representative and inclusive Government. The international community and the Security Council must remain engaged in order to ensure that Somalia and the region realize a more peaceful future, and we thank Council members for joining with us in sending that strong message today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Duale (Somalia): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I am very grateful for this opportunity to brief the Council today.

I would like to briefly address a few key points. First, the Federal Government of Somalia has worked tirelessly during the past year to reduce major threats to peace, security and stability in Somalia, and has also demonstrated its commitment to complying with the relevant Security Council resolutions, as a number of members of the Council have mentioned today.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the stark differences between the Somalia of the past—beginning in 1992, when the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea was established—and the Somalia of 2015. Indeed, the Committee and its mandate were established first when Somalia was in the middle of civil unrest and subsequently, when the mandate was expanded in 2009, during the administration of the nascent Transitional Federal Government, a period when the country lacked federal and regional institutions and financial oversight mechanisms.

In contrast, Somalia today has functioning institutions, including a board of directors for the Central Bank of Somalia, parliamentary oversight committees in the Somali Parliament, and the Office of the Accountant General and the independent Office of the Auditor General, as well as capacity support from the Financial Governance Committee, whose members are drawn from international financial institutions that include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank. The Financial Governance Committee's role is to assist the Federal Government in enhancing its capacities in public finance management and to support the Central Bank of Somalia in its efforts to recover and manage assets, conduct procurement activities, review potential contracts and concessions and establish federal revenue and budget procedures, as well as enhancing the effectiveness of the Central Bank's governance.

Progress has also been achieved on the legislative side. Today, there are four legislative instruments pending before the Somali Parliament of particular relevance to public finance management reform: an audit bill, a public finance management bill, a public procurement, concession and disposal bill and a bill to combat money-laundering and counter-terrorist financing. These institutional and legislative actions demonstrate that the Federal Government is rapidly improving its capacities and now has a proper mechanism in place for overseeing its financial governance.

The Federal Government has also made tremendous progress in establishing and implementing a framework for State-building in Somalia. To that end, it has established new interim regional administrations, a national independent electoral commission and national consultative forum, and has begun an extensive constitutional review process. Three years ago, when the Government was established, it created a vision for 2016 that identified three fundamental elements stipulated by the Provisional Constitution: constitutional review and implementation, completion of the federal system and democratization. The Government is also committed to a peaceful transition of political power in 2016.

Three years later, we are turning that vision into reality. The process of reviewing and revising the Constitution has started. Over the past three years, in accordance with our Constitution, we have supported the formation of three interim regional administrations, and the formation of the last, for the Hiran and Middle Shabelle regions, will proceed soon. That is the last

item remaining for the completion of the federalization map of Somalia. I am also happy to inform the Council that an agreement on resource-sharing between the regions and the central Government has been reached and signed.

Regarding democratization, earlier this week, on 19 October, we began the process of constructing the third strand of statehood, our national consultative forum, which is aimed at facilitating the process of building a State, a task that must be citizen-led. It cannot be exclusive in origin, implementation or outcomes. It must be accessible, representative and inclusive. The voice of the people who may have struggled to be heard in the past must be strengthened, and it is being strengthened. The National Consultation Forum is also intended to facilitate the interest of all the people of Somalia in reaching a common destination, strengthening legitimacy through peaceful and democratic means.

With respect to the security sector, we would like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that on 9 September, the President of Somalia, His Excellency Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, announced sweeping security sector reforms, committing the Government to building a more integrated and accountable security sector. We are currently in the process of carrying out a comprehensive review of the security sector in order to address structural imbalances and inefficiencies. That pending review would include a national threat assessment in order to rationalize and streamline the roles, missions and resource allocations across the security sector.

The Somali Government is committed to undertaking a comprehensive biometric registration process and a security sector financial governance review, with the support of our international partners, in order to establish a foundation on which we can build a transparent and sustainable security sector. Moreover, the Somali Government has made significant gains in liberating nearly 80 per cent of Somalia from Al-Shabaab and, more recently in beginning the process of national troop integration.

Somalia has also made significant progress in the past year in complying with the weapons and ammunition management notification, reporting and control requirements. By way of example, just over the past six months the Somali Government has marked over 4,500 weapons, established a weapons and ammunition technical working group, and agreed

upon the terms of reference for the joint verification team. Furthermore, officials of the Somali Government have held consultative meetings, to initiate the design of a road map to develop a comprehensive national framework governing the full life-cycle of weapons and ammunition. That clearly demonstrates the significant improvements made by the Somali Government in complying with arms notification requirements.

The Somali Government has also been receptive to the Security Council's resolutions and welcomes the reports of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, (S/2015/801 and S/2015/802). The Government of Somalia recognizes that it needs to work with the Monitoring Group, and we reiterate that we do not necessarily agree with all of the findings of the Monitoring Group. However, we will work with the Monitoring Group, and during the next mandate we shall seek to strengthen this relationship further. Once again, we would be pleased to welcome the Monitoring Group to Mogadishu again on a more frequent basis.

Finally, I wish to highlight and underline my Government's appreciation and thanks for the support given by international partners and community. We express our particular appreciation and thanks to the African Union and the countries that contribute troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Eritrea.

Mr. Tesfay (Eritrea): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Security Council for giving my delegation the opportunity to participate in a meeting on an agenda item that directly affects my country. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Chairman of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea and those representatives of different countries who, in defending the principles of impartiality and objectivity and the procedures of the Security Council, have played a constructive role in ensuring that resolution 2244 (2015) would reflect the reality in Eritrea, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region.

The two justifications for the imposition of the unjust sanctions against Eritrea were crystal clear. They were Eritrea's alleged support to Al-Shabaab in Somalia and the Djibouti-Eritrean conflict, in the context of their implications to regional and international peace and security. They were nothing more and nothing less than that.

The Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea has concluded that it has found "no evidence that Eritrea was supporting al-Shabaab" in Somalia (S/2015/802, p. 3). With regard to the disputes between Eritrea and Djibouti, the Presidents of the two countries have entrusted the State of Qatar to mediate their disputes. Therefore, since the two justifications for the imposition of the unjust sanctions against Eritrea are non-existent, the correct, logical and legal action should have been for the Security Council to immediately and unconditionally lift the unjust sanctions against Eritrea and terminate the mandate of the Monitoring Group's connection with Eritrea. Any other pretext is unacceptable. It is a political agenda.

Unfortunately, because of the misguided geopolitical agenda of the United States Administration in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region, the Security Council has sadly decided to maintain the unjust sanctions against the people and the Government of Eritrea for another year. Sanctions, as everyone knows, affect the poor, especially those who are the most vulnerable: women and children. Moreover, sanctions restrict Eritrea's capacity and capability to maintain its security and defend its sovereignty and to effectively contribute to the implementation of Security Council resolutions calling on all of us to fight against global terrorism and extremism.

Concerning resolution 2244 (2015), which has just been adopted, it is a decision that defies logic and legality. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea has put out a statement, which I will share for the record. The title of the press release is, "Security Council action that undermines its own legal authority" and it reads as follows:

"In a resolution adopted today, the United Nations Security Council has sadly decided to maintain yet for another year the unwarranted sanctions that were originally imposed against Eritrea on the Christmas eve of December 2009 and its follow-up resolution that was adopted in December 2011.

"At the time, Eritrea was falsely accused of dispatching 2000 troops to Somalia in support of Al-Shabaab. The pattern of unsubstantiated allegations was repeated in 2011 when Eritrea was wrongly accused — just one month prior to the adoption of resolution 2023 (2011) — of sending three plane loads of arms to Al-Shabaab through the airport of Baidowa.

"All these allegations were patently false. But trumped up charges were vital for the architects of the sanctions resolutions against Eritrea who used their diplomatic clout to ram through the unjust measures against Eritrea in a largely pliant Security Council.

"Six years on, all Security Council members and the international community as a whole, are fully aware of the false testimonies that were concocted against Eritrea to serve some political ends.

"Indeed, the United Nations report this year — as it was also the case last year — states categorically that the 'Monitoring Group' has found no evidence of Eritrean support to Al-Shabaab.

"Under normal circumstances, the United Nations Security Council should drop its case against Eritrea and rescind the sanctions resolutions which were unjust in the first place. But these are not normal times. And, instead of redressing these injustices — and making due reparations to Eritrea — the United Nations Security Council, despite the reservations and objections of several of its members, has opted to dwell on its misguided course under the heavy-handed prodding of the United States and its usual allies. As it happens, the United Nations Security Council is invoking non-existent facts and potential 'threats to regional peace and security' in its dogged desire to harass Eritrea.

"There is one unfathomable fact that the United Nations Security Council cannot gloss over as it unfairly victimizes Eritrea. Ethiopia continues to occupy sovereign Eritrean territories, including the town of Badme, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Ethiopia's acts also violate the Algiers Peace Agreement — guaranteed by the United Nations Security Council — and the final and binding arbitral decision. This must surely be an affront to the United Nations Security Council in as much as it wishes to hide it.

"The United Nations Security Council is mandated by Articles 39 to 41 of the United Nations Charter to take appropriate measures against Ethiopia. But the United Nations Security Council cannot contemplate this action as Ethiopia enjoys the full protection and tutelage of the United States. But in submitting to the United States political

wishes and preferences, the United Nations Security Council is compromising and undermining its own legal mandate and authority. Eritrea and the region will suffer the consequences of unwarranted United Nations action in the short-term. But in the

long term, the real casualty is international law, as well as the corrosion of the United Nations Security Council's legal authority in the maintenance of international peace and security."

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.



Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7542nd meeting

Friday, 23 October 2015, 10.45 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain)

Members:

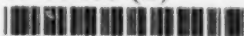
Angola	Mr. Lucas
Chad	Mr. Gombo
Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
China	Mr. Zhao Yong
France	Mr. Lamek
Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaite
Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Rycroft
United States of America	Ms. Sison
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramirez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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15-33153 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ambassador Raimonda Murmokaitė, Permanent Representative of Lithuania, in her capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

I now give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to thank the Council for this opportunity to brief it on the latest developments in Yemen. Our beloved Yemen is ablaze, and the Yemeni population finds itself in a catastrophic situation. The country is bleeding to death; its cities are collapsing; and its citizens have been deprived of their most basic rights in this conflict, which is both political and security-related.

This is not my first briefing to the Council; I had informed the Council previously that the Secretary-General had made extensive efforts in Geneva to make possible a rapprochement between the various parties to the conflict. Excellent ideas were heard, but they have not allowed us to put an end to the suffering of the Yemeni people. The parties to the conflict did not even meet face to face. Here it is important to note that the first talks took place more than five months ago.

Just last month, I informed the Council of my intention to convene consultations in the coming weeks. However, that initiative was cancelled, and additional preconditions were set. All of those missed opportunities only exacerbate the situation of the people of Yemen, whose future is today most uncertain.

I should like to reiterate what I said earlier to the Council: extremist groups are taking advantage of the

situation. At the same time, the international community judged that the return of the legitimate Government to Aden augured well for the future. That Government was to bring peace and security back to the country, inter alia by restoring basic services for the people. Regrettably, things did not happen thus. Instead, extremist groups attacked Government headquarters in Aden, and many citizens were killed. Additional security measures will have to be taken to protect civilians. Also, a mosque in Sana'a was attacked, leading to the deaths of many worshippers during Eid prayers.

Today we know that in this country, where faith and religion are of vital importance and where various communities coexisted peacefully, extremism prevails and weapons circulate freely, which only helps extremists. Yemenis are therefore suffering deeply today. That people, known for their generosity, hospitality and strong values, are today caught up in a disastrous humanitarian situation. Civilians are paying the price of a serious political conflict. Many citizens have been displaced within their own country in a quest to find safe haven and the most basic necessities for survival.

The most recent report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicates that the majority of Yemenis need humanitarian aid. Some 20 million Yemenis do not have access to safe drinking water. Hundreds of thousands — at least 500,000 — of Yemeni children are severely malnourished, which is one of the many consequences of this conflict.

Last month there was a wedding party which ended in a bloody fashion in the city of Taiz, while other cities have also been subjected to indiscriminate shelling. Taiz, the city that was once considered Yemen's cultural capital, has become a battlefield today. Its habitants are struggling to survive, night and day. Humanitarian aid, which is supposed to flow freely, is not reaching the people of Taiz, leading to grave shortages of medicines and other supplies. Large parts of the city have been left without safe drinking water, which poses a threat to the safety and health of the population.

The obstruction of commercial shipping continues to undermine the lives and livelihoods of Yemenis. Hospital services have been interrupted in many parts of the country and, according to OCHA, in September, there was a grave fuel crisis. Only 1 per cent of Yemen's normal monthly fuel requirements were allowed to

enter the Hodeidah region. We hope in the future to be able to help the Yemenis cope with this crisis.

We salute the efforts of all those who have sought to help the Yemeni people during this grave crisis, in particular humanitarian workers and the major organizations working in extremely difficult conditions. Moreover, we know that many humanitarian workers have lost their lives in that context. I salute them for their sacrifice.

The situation in Yemen is very serious, but I also want also to speak about certain elements of hope that suggest that there could be a better future for Yemen. I recently attended a forum organized by UN-Women in Larnaca, Cyprus, together with my office. Women from all over Yemen took part, which gave us an idea of the political diversity of the country. While the women differed in their views as to the reasons for the crisis, there was a genuine consensus on the importance of national political dialogue.

Women want to contribute to improving the humanitarian situation by helping humanitarian assistance reach its intended beneficiaries, particularly when it comes to food. They also want to help civilians deal with violence. The various parties to the conflict must return to the negotiating table to reach a peaceful solution. These women want to create an alliance for peace and security, and I will do all I can to help them by working with them and other women's and civil society groups to make their voices heard and thereby bring about an end to the crisis and a return to national dialogue.

When I last briefed the Council, I informed members of our intention to hold a meeting with the various parties to the conflict in Yemen. Sadly, that initiative did not come to fruition. Obviously, I have stayed in contact with the Houthis and the Yemeni Government in order to find a solution to the crisis. But thus far the two parties have reiterated their intention to abide by resolution 2216 (2015) and hand over their weapons.

I have recently made a tour of the Middle East where I met with leaders from Saudi Arabia, whom I briefed on the latest developments in the country and therefore on my discussions with the Houthis. In addition, at the margins of the General Assembly, I spoke with the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Mr. Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani, and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia,

the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman. I held similar consultations in Russia with senior Government officials, including Mr. Mikhail Bogdanov, Mr. Putin's special envoy to North Africa and the Middle East, and other Russian representatives, who were all very supportive of our efforts to reach a peaceful political solution to the conflict in Yemen. I am very grateful for their support for my efforts.

I have also worked closely in recent weeks with Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary-General Mr. Al Zayani in order to bolster the conditions for national dialogue in Yemen. To that end, I continued discussions with the various parties in Yemen. Mr. Ban Ki-moon informed President Hadi Mansour of the Houthis' acceptance of resolution 2216 (2015). In a letter dated 19 October, President Mansour informed Mr. Ban of his intention to send a delegation to participate in peace talks in order to negotiate an end to the present conflict on the basis of the framework set forth by resolution 2216 (2015).

I am full of hope and I trust that face-to-face discussions — the first of their kind — will allow us to bring together the Government and the Houthis with a view to paving the way for peace in Yemen and open peaceful political dialogue and leading to a new transitional stage. My proposals have all be integrated into resolution 2216 (2015), and we will seek to work towards a withdrawal of militias from key cities, the release of prisoners, the return of heavy weapons seized from the army, improvements in the humanitarian situation and the resumption of inclusive political dialogue. This will allow us to push forward the various initiatives, especial the GCC Initiative.

All of this will mark a new milestone in the history of Yemen, and it is our desire that the Yemeni people have hope restored after all the suffering they have experienced in the crisis. All parties today are aware that there can be no military solution to the conflict and that only peace talks and dialogue will pave the road to a better future. However, this initiative needs the Council's support and protection. The various sides to the conflict remain divergent, and we count on the Council to help us to encourage the parties to move forward in order to put an end to the conflict and return their country to peace.

Finally, I wish to express my hope, gratitude and faith in the future. We have hope that the consultations and discussions between Yemenis will bear fruit. I also want to reiterate our gratitude to the Council for its

support. I trust that the Yemenis will in the end unite behind a common vision for the country, turn the page on war and look towards a brighter future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Murmokaitė.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Pursuant to paragraph 19 (e) of resolution 2140 (2014), I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Committee since my last briefing on 11 December 2014 (see S/PV.7336). This is my third report to the Council.

The adoption of resolution 2204 (2015), on the 24 February 2015, renewed until 26 February 2016 the assets freeze and travel ban measures imposed by paragraphs 11 and 15 of resolution 2140 (2014). The mandate of the Panel of Experts was also extended by the same resolution until 25 March 2016. On 14 April 2015, with the adoption of resolution 2216 (2015), the Security Council added Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi Ansar Allah Movement, and Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, the son of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, to the sanctions list established and maintained by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014). The entry for Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh was updated with relevant biointentifier information gathered by the Panel of Experts on 16 September 2015. By resolution 2216 (2015), a targeted arms embargo was imposed aimed at preventing the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel of all types to designated individuals, or for their benefit, or those acting on their behalf, or at their direction, in Yemen.

The designation criteria for listing were also expanded by resolution 2216 (2015) to include violations of the arms embargo and obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Yemen, or access to, or distribution of, humanitarian assistance in Yemen. Resolution 2216 (2015) broadened the mandate of the Panel of Experts to include monitoring the implementation of the arms embargo, and the Secretary-General was requested to increase the size of the Panel from four to five experts. Resolution 2204 (2015) called on all Member States to report to the Committee, within 90 days of the adoption of the resolution, on the steps they had taken with a view to implementing effectively the measures imposed by paragraphs 11 and 15 of resolution 2140 (2014). To date,

20 implementation reports from Member States have been received, and they are available on the Committee's website. Resolution 2216 (2015) requires Member States to submit an initial report to the Committee when it undertakes an inspection pursuant to the provisions of the targeted arms embargo, provided an explanation on the grounds for inspections and the results of such inspections is given, and if prohibited items for supply, sale or transfer are found, further required such Member states to submit to the Committee, within 30 days, a subsequent report containing relevant details and information not contained in the initial report. To date the Committee has received only one initial written report and no subsequent reports. I call on all Member States that have not done so to submit the required reports without delay.

On 29 July 2015, the Committee amended its guidelines to reflect the provisions contained in resolutions 2204 (2015) and 2216 (2015). The guidelines are available on the Committee's website.

In its work, the Committee continues to be assisted by its Panel of Experts. On 2 April, the Secretary-General appointed new members of the Panel following the extension of its mandate, pursuant to resolution 2204 (2015). A new arms expert was appointed on 18 June 2015. On 17 August, in view of the resignation of the regional expert, Mr. Ahmed Himmiche was appointed to serve as the regional expert of the Panel and assumed the functions of the coordinator of the Panel as of 31 August.

During the reporting period, the Committee met five times in informal consultations to hear presentations by the Panel of Experts on its final report (S/2015/125), a mid-term update and an update on financial and international humanitarian law aspects of its mandate. The Committee also met for a briefing by Mr. Amer Daoudi, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Yemen Crisis, and joined informal consultations with the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui. Allow me now to go into some detail on the discussions held in the Committee.

On 2 February, the Committee discussed the final report to the Panel of Experts and subsequently agreed on the appropriate course of action regarding its recommendations. On 17 August, the Committee met to discuss the mid-term update of the Panel of Experts. On 25 August, Mr. Daoudi briefed the Committee on the

United Nations verification and inspection mechanism. Its purpose would be to ensure compliance with the provisions of resolution 2216 (2015) with regard to the targeted arms embargo and to help ensure access of commercial cargo to Yemen, which is essential for restoring the country's economy. Members of the Committee expressed their support for the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator's efforts and welcomed the imminent start-up of the mechanism.

On 18 September, Ms. Zerrougui briefed members of the Committee and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. She expressed deep concern over the escalating conflict in Yemen and its detrimental impact on the protection of children. Members of the Committee and of the Working Group strongly condemned ongoing violations and abuses against children in Yemen, and expressed deep concern over the impact of the deteriorating humanitarian situation on children. They also called for an end to all violations and abuses against children and agreed that the issue of the protection of children should be given continued attention.

Most recently, on 9 October, the Panel of Experts shared information with the Committee on international humanitarian law and finance aspects of its mandate. The members of the Panel noted that a continued investigations on the implementation of assets freeze, as well as on the attempt by some designated individuals to circumvent the effects of the targeted sanctions. They also underlined the need to take all the necessary steps to insure that the Panel had the ability to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law, including through access and travel to all parts of Yemen.

Members of the Committee reaffirmed their readiness to facilitate the implementation of the Panel's work and urged Member States to freeze assets of the designated individuals or entities, or by individuals or entities acting on their behalf, or at their direction, or by entities owned or controlled by them. The members

of the Committee also stressed the need for all sides to comply with international humanitarian law, including to take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects, and to end the recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, and urgently work for the United Nations and humanitarian aid organizations to bring assistance to those in need throughout the country.

Before I conclude, I would like to draw attention to the efforts that have been undertaken to promote transparency in relation to the work of the Committee. An open briefing of the 2140 Committee was convened on 1 September 2015 to provide all States Members of the United Nations with an overview of the sanctions regime and the mandate of the Committee, and to provide an opportunity to ask questions. At that meeting, the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts briefed Member States on the mandate and activities of the Panel. Furthermore, the Committee engaged in dialogue with representatives of Yemen and the State members of the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf. The Committee has also regularly issued press releases after significant discussions or decisions. I am also happy to note that all my reports to the Council have been presented in public meetings.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of the full implementation by Member States of all sanctions measures imposed by resolutions 2140 (2015), 2204 (2015) and 2216 (2015), as well as of meeting their relevant reporting obligations. I would also like to encourage further cooperation with the Panel of Experts, including my providing it with the information and by facilitating its visits to Member States.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now invite members of the Council to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.



Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7543rd meeting

Tuesday, 27 October 2015, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain)

Members:

Angola	Mr. Lucas
Chad	Mr. Gombo
Chile	Ms. Sapag Muñoz de la Peña
China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
France	Mr. Delattre
Jordan	Mrs. Kavar
Lithuania	Mrs. Jakuboné
Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
Nigeria	Mr. Laro
Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ..	Mr. Wilson
United States of America	Ms. Sison
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/813)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/813)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/813, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: The members of the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2139 (2014) in February 2014 in recognition of the magnitude of the human cost this conflict carried. The purpose and intent of the resolution was clear and unambiguous — to seek protection for civilians caught in the midst of the fighting, to ensure that civilian facilities and infrastructure were not attacked, and to compel the parties to enable unimpeded access for humanitarians trying to reach people in desperate need of assistance. The 20 reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council since the adoption of the resolution highlight the parties' contempt — month after month — for the Council's resolution and their minimum legal obligations under international law.

The failure of the parties to uphold the basic tenets of international humanitarian and human rights law has propelled the Syrian people to levels of tragedy and despair that could barely have been imagined five years ago. By any measure, the situation in Syria has

worsened since the beginning of the year. We now estimate that some 13.5 million people in Syria are in need of some form of protection and humanitarian assistance throughout the country — an increase of some 1.2 million in just 10 months. More than 6 million of those in need are children.

This is one of the largest displacement crises of modern times. Fighting and violence have forced over half of the people in Syria from their homes in a period of just over four years, many of them multiple times. There are now some 6.5 million people displaced inside Syria. In addition, nearly 4.2 million have fled the country, with neighbouring countries in the region bearing an enormous burden. An increasing number of Syrians fleeing the war and violence are willing to risk everything aboard unseaworthy boats and dinghies to reach Europe; of the 680,000 arrivals by sea in the Mediterranean in 2015, over 50 per cent are Syrian. They have a right to seek asylum without any form of discrimination.

The rising levels of fighting and violence over the past few weeks have had an enormous humanitarian impact, resulting in large-scale death, injury and displacement to civilians, particularly in northern Syria. Indiscriminate attacks on civilian-populated areas continue with impunity. In Aleppo city, for example, pro-Government forces and non-State armed opposition groups have continued mutual shelling inside civilian-populated areas, with hundreds killed and injured in September. Meanwhile, clashes erupted in the city in late September between the Kurdish People's Protection Units, the Al-Nusra Front and non-State armed opposition groups, resulting in multiple civilian deaths and temporarily impacting humanitarian access to eastern Aleppo city. On 23 October, the main access route from Hama to western Aleppo city was cut due to an offensive by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We are very concerned at this development, which places at further risk some 700,000 people living in the western part of the city.

The latest estimates indicate that over 120,000 people have been displaced in northern Syria since early October as a result of aerial bombardment and ground offensives among the parties. This includes some 45,000 people displaced from the southern outskirts of Aleppo city to relatively safer areas to the west and south following a Government forces offensive over the past week. Meanwhile, approximately 80,000 people have been displaced from northern Hama and

southern Idlib governorates to relatively safer parts of these governorates since early October following an offensive by Government forces. Elsewhere in Syria, thousands more have been displaced in Homs, rural Damascus and Deir ez-Zor governorates over the past few weeks.

The pace of displacement in Syria remains relentless. Well over 1.2 million people have been displaced so far this year, many for the second or third time. Further displacement is expected to continue at a similar rate unless there is an end to the fighting.

Attacks on health facilities and health workers also remain relentless. The United Nations and partners have recorded attacks on five hospitals in Hama, Idlib and Aleppo governorates since the launch of recent offensives, leading to a number of casualties and their immediate closure due to severe infrastructural damage, exacerbating an already dire situation for civilians living in these areas. Since the start of the conflict, Physicians for Human Rights has documented attacks on at least 313 medical facilities and the deaths of 679 medical workers. Such attacks should cease immediately; parties to the conflict must ensure respect for and the protection of health facilities, workers and patients under international humanitarian law.

While we know where those considered to be most vulnerable are located, humanitarian organizations are still not able to get sustained, unimpeded access to millions of affected people. Latest estimates indicate that some 4.5 million people are living in hard-to-reach areas. Despite our best efforts, we have been able to reach only a small fraction of people living in these areas in 2015 as a result of active conflict, shifting front-lines, bureaucratic hurdles and conditions imposed by the parties.

The parties to the conflict continue to use siege as a weapon of war in Syria. Following a comprehensive review, we now estimate that some 393,700 people are living under siege in Syria, including some 200,000 people in Deir ez-Zor city, besieged by ISIL; some 181,200 people besieged by the Syrian Government in various locations in eastern Ghutah, as well as Darayya and Zabadani in rural Damascus; and some 12,500 people besieged by non-State armed opposition groups and the Al-Nusrah Front in Foah and Kefraya in Idlib. The 26,500 people in Nubul and Zahra, in Aleppo governorate, are no longer considered besieged following consistent and credible reports that access to and from the enclave for people and commercial goods

have significantly improved over the past three months, although access remains challenging and protection concerns acute.

Access to besieged areas remains pitiful and wholly insufficient. So far in 2015, the United Nations has been able to reach only 3.6 per cent of people with health assistance and only 0.5 per cent of people with food per month in besieged areas.

Last week, humanitarian operations began under the framework of the ceasefire agreement covering Zabadani, Madaya, Foah, Kefraya and neighbouring towns, reached in Istanbul on 22 September with the facilitation of the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria. On 18 October, 31 trucks delivered medical and humanitarian supplies simultaneously to 29,500 people in Madaya, as well as the besieged areas of Zabadani, Foah and Kefraya. A joint convoy of the United Nations, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross accompanied 23 SARC trucks to rural Damascus, where two trucks crossed into Zabadani and 21 more entered Madaya and Buqayn, hosting many people displaced from Zabadani. Eight trucks delivered a proportional amount of health, food, nutrition, non-food items and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies to Foah and Kefraya via a United Nations cross-border operation through Turkey's Bab al-Hawa border point, with the support of the Idlib branch of the SARC. The United Nations and its partners stand ready to immediately implement the remaining points covered under the agreement, including the delivery of additional humanitarian assistance and the evacuation of the critically wounded. This complex mission shows once again that when there is the political will, there is a way to improve the situation for civilians trapped in conflict in Syria.

Even as the political and military situation evolves, the immediate priority for humanitarian organizations remains reaching all people in need wherever they may be found in Syria. To do this, we must have sustained, predictable and unimpeded access throughout the country. While I welcome the continued progress made on visas for United Nations staff members by the Syrian authorities, this must be followed by urgent and significant progress in other areas. So far this year, only 23 of the 85 convoy requests made by the United Nations have been approved in principle by the Syrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and fewer than half of those approved have been able to actually proceed due

to a combination of lack of final security clearances from Syrian authorities, lack of safe passage from non-State armed opposition groups, and insecurity.

I once again call upon the Syrian authorities to urgently approve the 46 currently pending inter-agency convoy requests and to allow convoys previously agreed in principle, which are awaiting their clearance, to proceed. I also call on Non-State Armed Groups, as well as listed terrorist groups, to allow the deliveries they are preventing. We would be able to reach an additional 1.5 million people in dire need of assistance in hard-to-reach and besieged locations through these inter-agency convoys if approvals and safe passage were granted.

We all need to guard against becoming numb to the impact of this conflict, given the vast numbers and the sense of political impasse. Yet recent developments in Syria are a telling reminder that it is ordinary women, men and children who continue to bear the brunt of this conflict. Living conditions in all areas of the country continue to deteriorate sharply. Entire neighbourhoods and communities are at risk from explosive weapons; over 11 million people are in need of health assistance, including 25,000 trauma cases per month; nearly 9 million are unable to meet their basic food needs; 70 per cent of the population are without regular access to safe drinking water amid continuing water cuts; schools and hospitals are attacked; and poverty and unemployment are rampant amid rising prices. Winter is fast approaching and is likely to further exacerbate the situation for many families.

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners will continue to respond to the growing needs to the best of their ability. While we are reaching millions of people per month, we continue to try and find ways to scale up life-saving assistance throughout Syria in an extremely complex and insecure environment. Humanitarian workers are putting their lives on the line, but remain undeterred. I strongly encourage donors to maintain, and where possible increase their generous support for life-saving humanitarian operations, as well as recovery and resilience activities, in 2016.

As I have said to the Council before, the crisis urgently requires a political solution that addresses the root causes of the conflict and meets the aspirations of the Syrian people, who have suffered for far too long. In the absence of such a solution, I sincerely hope that the Council and relevant Member States will continue to use their influence with the parties to the conflict in

order to remind them to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, to distinguish between civilians and combatants, and to take all feasible precautions to avoid further civilian injury and loss of life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

Albert Einstein once said that insanity was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Today, 60 years after Einstein's death, it seems that some Governments are still not familiar with that reality. They continue to repeat their mistakes and miscalculations and to expect different outcomes. It is undeniable that interference in countries' domestic affairs leads only to the destruction of the country concerned, creates humanitarian crises, leads to chaos and devastation and creates fertile ground for terrorism and murderers. That is clear from the destruction of Iraq, Libya and other countries. Foreign interference has brought us Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front, the Khorasan group and other groups. Terrorists now have a State — a caliphate, as some like to call it.

In spite of all that, failing to adhere to Einstein's logic, certain States continue to press on with the implementation of this deadly recipe in Syria, using the same slogans, even as everyone else has realized that the resulting devastation is more than clear. Tony Blair, former Head of the British Government, has said, 12 years after the British-American invasion of Iraq, that that act of aggression was based on erroneous and false information. Fourteen years after the terrorist attack against the World Trade Center in New York, we see that the strategy adopted in the context of the war on terrorism has created hundreds of Bin Ladens, instead of getting rid of just one Bin Laden. Instead of just one Al-Qaida in Afghanistan, we have dozens of groups throughout the world that have adopted its doctrine. Terrorism has now come to those who support it.

A look at the humanitarian situation reveals the same thing: the stubbornness of some to carry out the same misguided policies while expecting different results is more than evident. Some claim to want to remedy the humanitarian crisis in Syria, but they refuse to prioritize the fight against terrorism. They

continue to impose unilateral economic measures against the Syrian people. They continue to deny the Syrian Government its role, refusing to coordinate their efforts with it in providing humanitarian assistance and combating terrorism. Five years since the crisis began, today it is absolutely clear to everyone that this policy has failed to resolve the humanitarian crisis. Moreover, it is undeniable that it has aggravated the crisis and worsened the suffering of the Syrian people, forcing a large part of the population to become refugees or internally displaced persons. It is therefore essential to change the way in which we address the situation, if we want to have different results, that is, to tangibly improve the humanitarian situation in Syria. To do so, we need to take the following steps.

First and foremost, the main reason for the crisis has to be resolved, namely, the creation and spread of terrorism supported from abroad. That requires the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), in collaboration with and with the cooperation of the Government of Syria. Those who believe that cooperating with the Government is beneath them, whose sole interest is to undermine the Syrian Government, President and army and who prefer to deal with the demons of terrorism rather than with the Government in order to tackle those demons are creating an absurd situation that has nothing to do with the rules of sane behaviour and thinking, nor with the principles of political science and strategy.

This absurd situation has led to the presence in Syria and Iraq of tens of thousands of foreign fighters from more than 100 countries — as illustrated in the nine reports of the Security Council Committees on Al-Qaida and Counter-Terrorism, among other places. Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front and associated groups did not emerge from a vacuum. They were nurtured, financed and trained. Their travel was facilitated via airports and across borders. They were given visas. Through Turkish intermediaries, they have even been allowed to engage in trade in oil and gas. It is therefore necessary to end the practice by the Governments of some States of continuing to fund, arm and train terrorists. We cannot talk about ending Syria's pain and ending the crisis and at the same time maintain a deafening silence in the face of Turkey and Jordan using their territories to allow the passage of foreign terrorists and mercenaries, or while Saudi Arabia and Qatar support terrorism with great generosity, rather than promoting the financing of the humanitarian plan, which is only

37 per cent funded — in spite of the various pro forma conferences held here and there for that purpose — and at a time when the United States has spent half a billion dollars, which would be enough to close the gap, as part of its programme to train and equip the “moderate” opposition, which now includes just five groups, the Al-Nusra Front having regained its weapons thanks to the United States.

The issue of combating terrorism brings me to the second element necessary for ending the humanitarian crisis, namely, supporting a political solution. Fighting terrorism will contribute to the success of a political solution, which must include a dialogue among Syrians, under Syrian leadership, without external interference and with full respect for the sovereignty and independence of Syria, as well as its unity and territorial integrity. That is in line with the provisions of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, as well as the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

In that regard, I would like to recall that the Government of Syria announced in the General Assembly, via its Minister for Foreign Affairs (see A/70/PV.25), its agreement to participate in the working group proposed by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura, based on our belief that a political solution is the only way to resolve the crisis. The problem lies with the other parties, who do not want such a solution to be reached. That was also the case with regard to Mr. De Mistura's suggestion following the Geneva II conference for a cessation of fighting in the city of Aleppo, as well as with regard to the Kofi Annan plan. In spite of all that, there are still some who unfairly say that the Syrian Government is refusing a political solution. Meanwhile, they protect the very parties who have refused Mr. De Mistura's initiatives.

We have reviewed the report (S/2015/813) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). It is a biased and politicized report, with many gaps and falsehoods. We have transmitted two letters in that regard to the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General. I shall limit myself to saying that the report fails to draw attention to the fact that the forces of the so-called coalition have targeted innocent civilians as well as infrastructure in Syria, including roads, bridges, refineries, schools and hospitals. Also targeted was a power station in western Aleppo, the only one in

the entire city. In addition, a centre for children with special needs in Raqa was destroyed, killing dozens of innocent children, under the pretext that Daesh was the target. Since the beginning of the coalition airstrikes, we have seen greater numbers of Daesh terrorists brought from abroad and the expansion of their areas of influence. Thus we are surprised that the report uses misleading accounts that are of unknown source, have no credibility, and seek only to fish in troubled waters and cast shadows over the joint Russian-Syrian efforts under way to tackle Daesh, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups, on the basis of a request from the Syrian Government and the Charter of the United Nations, which has led to the retreat of terrorist groups in more than one place and forced them to withdraw from several areas that were under their control.

We have said in the past that the term "non-State armed opposition groups" is unacceptable and runs counter to what we are seeing on the ground in Syria. It also goes against what the Security Council's own sanctions committee describes. What the report describes as non-State armed opposition groups are, in fact, the Army of Conquest, which was created by Turkey and which includes elements of Ahrar Al-Sham and the Al-Nusra Front. Simple math — one plus one

equals two — makes clear that the Army of Islam plus the Army of Conquest equals the Al-Nusra Front, which is on the list of terrorist entities. The Army of Islam, which is active in rural Damascus, includes mercenaries from Chechnya, other countries of the Caucasus and elsewhere who are financed by the Saudi Arabian secret service and have declared their allegiance to Daesh.

The Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, financed and run by a joint Arab-American operations room in Amman, includes 8,000 Jordanian Salafists and thousands of other terrorists. Al-Nusra Front terrorists, openly supported by Israel, are attacking the peacekeeping forces in the Golan and have abducted Filipino and Fijian soldiers. They not only receive support but are also given medical attention by Israel.

All of this is summarized in a report of the Secretary-General under "non-State armed opposition"; but are these not foreign mercenaries?

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.